

TO

MY WIFE

WITHOUT WHOM THIS BOOK WOULD  
NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

# WHY THE CROSS?

BY THE LATE

ARCHDEACON H. E. GUILLEBAUD, M.A.

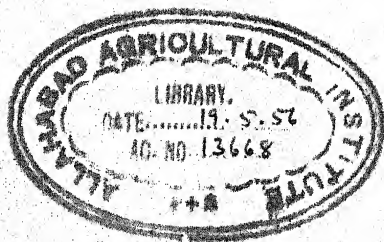
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## FOREWORD

It is a pleasure to commend to the thoughtful attention and careful study of readers this fresh edition of a book by a painstaking scholar on the central event and the most urgent question of world history. This one event of the Cross of Christ is a final revelation both of the character and consequence of human sin, and of the wonder and sacrifice of Divine love. Its importance for the Christian is such that none of us can rightly evade the challenge to study the teaching of Scripture in order to arrive at a reasoned understanding of the Divinely ordained way of man's salvation. It was at such an understanding that the writer of this book had arrived, and his writing is capable of helping others, who will thoughtfully and prayerfully use it, to reach a similar goal.

The Christian Gospel is not a collection of ideas and ideals. It is essentially something much more concrete and objective. It is a proclamation of facts, of something done in flesh and blood by an historical person, Jesus, at a fixed time and place—as the Creed says, “under Pontius Pilate.” The Gospel is a declaration of certain events of history, and of the consequences which follow from them. It is the proclamation of the deeds done in the human body of incarnate God for the redemption of the human race. Christ came, as R. W. Dale said, not so much to preach the Gospel, but that there might be a Gospel to preach. Man's hope of salvation lies not in His teaching, nor in His example, but in something which He did. The point of crisis and triumph, where everything came to a head, is His crucifixion and resurrection. So these events are (1 Cor. xv. 3) declared to be the Gospel.

But to be adequately appreciated the event of the Cross must be seen in its full context.

(a) *Its origin.* How, and whence, and why was it initiated? It was no unexpected accident. It was fore-ordained of God. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. The coming of Christ to die was the gracious provision of Divine love to meet otherwise desperate human need.

(b) *Its course.* What was the necessary way of its accomplishment? It involved supreme self-sacrificing condescension. God himself became man. He took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death. This death was not just resigned to as inevitable, but willingly and deliberately faced in free choice as necessary and indispensable for men's salvation. Christ was not a helpless victim but a willing actor, freely choosing to drink the cup that His Father had given Him. As 1 Peter ii. 22-24 explains, though He was innocent He saw in the suffering inflicted on Him the righteous judgment of God, because He was bearing the penalty not of His own sins but of ours.

(c) *Its consummation and consequences.* How did it all end, and what results followed? Christ's death was not defeat. It was the deliberately chosen way through to victory. After men had crucified Him, God vindicated Him. He was raised from the dead, enthroned at God's right hand, and assured of full dominion. He gave, and still gives, the gift of the indwelling Spirit to all who believe in Him. He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

Thought of His death as His supreme task was clearly present in Christ's own mind from the beginning of His public ministry. In accepting John's baptism He was numbered with the transgressors. He thus identified Himself with sinners, and may well have been consciously consecrating Himself to the work of bearing and washing away our sin. Later, during His ministry, and particularly towards its end, our Lord's mind about it was unmistakable. He regarded it as God ordained; "thus it is written." As James Denney said, "He saw it as the will of God, from that Scripture which was for Him the Word of God." So He

accepted it as necessary; "thus it must be." Also, He obviously regarded it as a task intimately connected with His Messianic office. As soon as the disciples openly confessed Him as Messiah, He began to indicate to them that, just because He was the Messiah, He must suffer. So He made its accomplishment His freely chosen determination.

Simon Peter provides an illustration of a disciple who had recognized the Person of Christ but was unwilling to accept the necessity of His humiliation to the shameful cross. In dealing with Him the Lord used an acted parable. He began to wash His disciples feet. When Peter refused to accept such a service, Christ said plainly and decisively, "Except I wash thee, thou hast no part with Me." These words imperiously and dogmatically express an unalterable principle. There is no entrance into Christ's Kingdom except through the cleansing made possible by His shed blood.

Mr. Guillebaud wrote as one who had shared in this cleansing, and found in it the ground and assurance of peace, joy and hope. He wrote under a compelling constraint, eager to be used of God so to set forth the spirit-inspired teaching of the written Word of God that others might be helped to see and to share in redemption through Christ's blood.

It is well, therefore, that every prospective reader of this book should first be asked to say his own "Amen" to what was undoubtedly the prayer of its author, and ask that by the blessing of God the reading of this book may help him (or her) to appreciate more profoundly, to experience more deeply, and to preach more worthily, the saving power of the Cross of Christ.

ALAN M. STIBBS.



## PREFACE

IN the depths of a beautiful pine wood at a Surrey village called The Chart, this book has had its beginning and its ending. Here was given to a few students a talk on "Some Essential Truths," which contained the leading thoughts out of which the following pages ultimately developed. It was this talk which first suggested the idea of something in book form, written in non-theological terms for the ordinary reader.

A few weeks later came a conversation with a woman student, who found the thought of being "blood-bought" abhorrent. The idea of a book again presented itself. Urged by my wife, I began rather reluctantly to try to put into writing the arguments then used, repeated in substance from the talk in The Chart wood. The work had to be laid aside more than once for various reasons, and was only completed in its final form in the early hours of a morning two days before my sailing for Africa.

Once again we found ourselves near The Chart, and spent a few of those last remaining hours in correcting and preparing the manuscript for the press.

And so the unchanging beauty of that pine wood forms for us the background of that glorious eternal truth, that all who believe in Jesus Christ are a redeemed and purchased people, bought with a price, and that price the precious blood of Christ.

H. E. G.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD - - - - -	v
PREFACE - - - - -	ix
INTRODUCTION :	
OBJECTIONS STATED - - - - -	13

## PART I.—IS A SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT CHRISTIAN?

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. OUR LORD'S TEACHING ABOUT GOD - - -	19
NOTE A.—ETERNAL PUNISHMENT - - -	39
NOTE B.—OUR LORD'S TEACHING ON THE CON- DITIONS OF FORGIVENESS, - - -	40
II. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD - - -	45
III. LOVE AND LIGHT - - -	57
IV. PAUL'S EXPLANATION - - -	65
NOTE.—THE MEANING OF "RECONCILE"— - -	78
V. THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS - - -	83
NOTE A.—MATT. VIII. 17 - - -	99
NOTE B.—SUBSTITUTE OR REPRESENTATIVE - - -	100
VI. THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS - - -	102

# PART II.—IS SUBSTITUTION IMMORAL OR INCREDIBLE?

CHAPTER	PAGE
VII. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS - - -	119
VIII. THE DOCTRINE STATED - - -	121
NOTE A.—THE MEANING OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST	136
NOTE B.—CERTAIN TERMS DEFINED - -	141
IX. IS SUBSTITUTION IMMORAL? - - -	146
X. IS SUBSTITUTION INCREDIBLE? - - -	155
XI. SOME OTHER THEORIES EXAMINED - -	164
XII. THE GLORY OF THE CROSS - - -	180

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. PUNISHMENT INFLICTED BY LOVE -	187
APPENDIX B. THE INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES -	189
APPENDIX C. THE CATEGORY OF LAW - - -	192
APPENDIX D. "TRADITIONAL FORMULÆ"? - -	196

# WHY THE CROSS?

## INTRODUCTION

### OBJECTIONS STATED

THIS is a tolerant age. Perhaps there has never been a time when the evils of theological bitterness have been more clearly recognized. And yet, among those who to-day call themselves Christians, there is a fundamental cleavage of opinion which is concerned with nothing less than the basis of man's salvation, the ground on which God forgives the sinner. Many people, indeed, find it difficult to discuss the evangelical doctrine of the Atonement without expressions of repugnance and disgust. But there are others, equally sincere, who find in it the foundation of peace and joy in the heart, and the source of victory in the life. The dividing line between these points of view is not that of age, for there are old and young on both sides of it. It is not that of social position or of education, for members of the same family and students attending the same University lectures are not infrequently divided by it. It is not even altogether that of temperament, for the same individual can pass from the one attitude to the other. The extent and violence of the disagreement is in some ways a measure of its importance, for tolerant folk do not grow hot over trifles.

The following words from a popular hymn will supply a test by which anyone can at once determine where he stands in this matter.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood:  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

The joyful worship expressed in the last line may give some idea of what the belief outlined in this verse means to those who heartily accept it. But to many others these same words are nothing but an offence and a provocation, a blasphemy against the loving Father, a contradiction of the fundamental teaching of Jesus Christ. It is the purpose of this book first to summarize as fairly as possible the reasons for this attitude to this evangelical doctrine, and then to attempt to meet the objections raised.

"Why all this talk of blood?" say the objectors. "Texts like 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission'\* offend our moral sense. How can it possibly be true that there is no forgiveness without shedding of blood? What a terrible picture of God this suggests to our mind, One Who will not forgive unless He be propitiated by a blood-offering! Jesus did not talk like that. He revealed to us a loving Father, Who sees the returning prodigal afar off, and runs to meet him with joyful and immediate forgiveness. Where does He say that the prodigal was saved by a blood-offering? John tells us that God is Love; all His nature therefore is summed up in Love, and all that He does is in some sense an activity of Love. That being so, what need could there be of a blood-offering? All this talk of blood is a relic of the blood-sacrifices of the Old Testament, it is the outworn theology of sacrifice for which the modern mind has no use.

"We know that two or three proof-texts for the blood-theology can be found in the Gospels, but what are these against the whole trend of the teaching of Jesus? May not the sacrificial form be merely the husk, a metaphor only? Or may it not be due to the reporters of Jesus rather than to the Master Himself? We appeal from the isolated proof-text to the revelation of God in Jesus, with which no part of His authentic teaching can really be in conflict.

"Paul? Yes, he provides a number of proof-texts for the

\* Heb. ix. 22.

old sacrifice theology, but, great Christian though he was, he was never fully emancipated from the Jewish ideas in which he was brought up, and we cannot be bound by his authority where it conflicts with our reason and shocks our moral sense. Let us rather follow Paul at his highest and best, where he throws aside Jewish forms, and boldly says that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses' (2 Cor. v. 19, R.V.).

"There is the heart of the truth. God is always and only Love,\* and on His side there is no barrier. Our sin makes a barrier on our side, and it is our hard hearts that need to be won to Him. What is better fitted to win them than the story of the love of God in Christ which refused not even the death of the Cross for our sakes, for the very purpose that His self-sacrificing love might win us to God?"

So far, our objector has been voicing his repugnance to the idea that a blood-sacrifice should be necessary at all as a condition of the forgiveness of sins. But he does not stop there. What offends him is not only the thought that a penalty had to be paid for sin before it could be forgiven, but also it seems to him monstrously unfair and immoral that we should be delivered from that penalty by the death of another as our substitute. Suppose we read to him the words of Isa. liii. 5, 6:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

He would no doubt admit the beauty of the language,

\* See *Liberal Evangelicalism*: Hodder and Stoughton, pp. 122, 123, "God is only Love; all His attributes and activities are simply functions of His Love."

but would recoil violently from the idea that this prophecy applies literally to the Lord Jesus Christ and is a true explanation of the means of our salvation.

"The whole idea of vicarious punishment is fundamentally immoral. What would be thought of a judge who should accept the offer of an innocent person to die in the place of a condemned murderer? And this injustice is attributed to God, as the sole means whereby He can satisfy His justice!

"Also, belief in a substitutionary theory of the Atonement usually goes with belief in that appalling doctrine of everlasting punishment. But if Jesus died as our Substitute, how could a few hours' suffering of the Substitute, however terrible the sufferings were, be an equivalent to hell even for one sinner?

"Again, there is something mechanical or magical in supposing that the death of One who died 1900 years ago can actually be the direct means of my forgiveness. That that death could win my love and move me to repentance, and so secure my forgiveness, I can well understand. But you ask me to believe something beyond this, that my guilt was actually laid upon Jesus as a victim 1900 years before I was born, and that if I believe in Him as my Saviour, the only thing that can take away my sin will be His blood, the blood of that Sacrifice of long ago. I can never believe that, and it amazes me that anyone of any intelligence in this twentieth century can believe it."

It is, of course, impossible in a few paragraphs to express the arguments of all the different types of mind which would agree in repudiating the teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ died in our stead and that we are saved by His blood. Some would express their objections much less gently, and with much less respect for the Bible. Some, on the other hand, would show a deeper recognition of the awfulness of sin, and of the difficulty which must beset the forgiveness





tion which goes deepest, and, until it has been met, it would be futile to attempt to answer the second.

But how are these objections to be met? *Let us invite the objector to examine afresh the evidence of the New Testament*, and especially of the first three Gospels. These are, at the lowest estimate, the earliest records of Christian teaching which have come down to us. We have no other record of what our Lord taught. In the first place, then, our aim will be to examine His teaching to see whether its general trend does really agree with the representation of it in our objector's argument given above. Then we may pass on to the Epistles, and see whether the "proof-texts" do stand by themselves, or whether in fact they are only outstanding examples of a general body of teaching.

The objector is not asked to consider this line of approach as necessarily, from his point of view, a final argument. But he is asked at least to face up to what it is that he rejects, if he does reject it. He claims that redemption by the blood of the Lamb (if the words are more than a vague metaphor) is contrary to the revelation of God through the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this assertion based on the teaching of our Lord as a whole, or only on one side of it? Such a question can be answered only by examining the evidence.

In the first instance our object will be not to seek for evidence directly relating to the Atonement, but simply to discover the nature of the picture of God presented to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. Afterwards we shall see whether the doctrine of the Atonement, first as taught by Paul and then as taught by other New Testament writers, is in harmony with our Lord's teaching about God. Then the evidence of the life and teaching of our Lord contained in the first three Gospels will be examined, in so far as it bears directly on the meaning of His death. Objections against the morality and credibility of the Atonement will be considered in Part II (Chapters IX and X).

# PART I: IS A SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT CHRISTIAN?

## CHAPTER I

### OUR LORD'S TEACHING ABOUT GOD

THE teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ about God is of fundamental importance to the doctrine of the Atonement. We accept unreservedly the argument that any theory of atonement which really clashes with His presentation of the character of God cannot possibly be true.

It is well to observe in advance that our Lord's teaching about God is by no means limited to direct and formal statements about Him. There are very many of our Lord's sayings which teach us about God, even though His Name may not be mentioned. In the survey of His teaching in the present chapter, any saying which throws light on the principles by which God governs the world, or the judgments which He passes on sin, will be included in our study, whether there is any actual mention of Him or not.

We begin with the Sermon on the Mount. Here we find the Love of God shining out clearly.

"Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. . . . Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matt. v. 44, 45, 48, R.V.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Matt. vii. 11.

But in the same Sermon we also find sayings of a different kind.

"Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the judgment, but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." Matt. v. 22.

"If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." Matt. v. 29, R.V.

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." Matt. v. 25, 26.

There may be room for difference of opinion as to the meaning of the details of the short parable contained in the last passage, but surely it is evident that our Lord is speaking of spiritual things. The solemn and emphatic words of verse 26 are a warning that there is such a thing as a sentence in the spiritual world, comparable to an imprisonment from which "thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

In chapter vii we find warnings in terrible language addressed first to those who go their own way and reject the Gospel, and then to those who profess to receive the truth but do not obey it in their lives.

"Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it." Matt. vii. 13, 14, R.V.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is

hewn down, and cast into the fire." Matt. vii. 19. Compare Matt. iii. 10.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 21-23.

We now pass on from the Sermon on the Mount, and continue to find the same intertwining of two threads of teaching, Love and Judgment. In chapter viii we read,

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. viii. 11, 12.

In the next chapter the Lord reveals the purpose of His coming in these great sayings:

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. ix. 12, 13.

But in chapter x He indicates the position of those who refuse to listen to the message of salvation in the day of opportunity.

"Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and

Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city."  
Matt. x. 14, 15.

In this same tenth chapter of Matthew there is a passage which shows, perhaps more clearly than any other in the Gospels, how inextricably interwoven are the two threads of Love and Judgment in our Lord's revelation of His Father, and, indeed, of Himself.

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. x. 28-33.

The Lord is warning His disciples against denying Him for fear of man. For their encouragement let them remember that their heavenly Father Who watches over the sparrows is caring for them, that every hair of their heads is numbered, and that nothing can happen to them but by His permission and under His control. But let them remember too that whereas men can only kill the body, there is One Who can destroy in hell both soul and body of the apostate.\* And the Lord Jesus Himself will one day confess as His own, in the presence of His Father, those who

\* Some have actually interpreted "him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" as referring to the devil! When are we told to fear the devil? Luke's version is clearer still, "him who after he has killed has power (*exousian*, authority) to cast into hell." Has the devil authority to kill people and cast them into hell?



have confessed Him before men : but those who have denied Him He will deny. The awfulness of the words of Judgment is thrown into greater relief by their close connection with the words of Love. Who can separate what the Speaker has so inseparably joined? This passage is also found in a somewhat stronger and more vivid form in Luke xii. 4-9.

Chapter xi begins with the beautiful record of our Lord's care for His sorely tried but wavering servant John the Baptist. He meets his question with an answer which the Baptist could not fail to recognize as conclusive, and adds a very gentle rebuke; then, lest the rebuke should injure John's reputation in the eyes of the people, He follows it up with praise such as He never bestowed on any other man. But the praise was held back until John's messengers were gone, lest the gentle rebuke, so necessary for John's welfare, should thereby lose its force. There indeed is the Son of Man revealed, not breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax (Matt. xi. 1-11; xii. 20).

Immediately after this revelation of loving wisdom comes the prophesying of woes upon the cities of Canaan which rejected His teaching (Matt. xi. 20-24). We may well believe that these woes were uttered with a breaking heart, but uttered they were, and though He Who spoke them was Love, they certainly do not bear on their face evidence that they were in themselves utterances of Love.

Then, again, before the chapter closes, the seeking Love of God speaks in the appeal:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. 28.

Chapter xii quotes Isaiah's revelation of God's patient love, to which reference has already been made, as exemplified in action in our Lord's dealing with the Baptist. But the same chapter contains that terrible saying, recorded by Mark and Luke as well:

"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Matt. xii. 31, 32. Compare Mark iii. 28-30; Luke xii. 10.

This seems to mean that there is a sin against light which has the effect of closing the door to repentance, and therefore to forgiveness. But whatever is the exact meaning of the saying, it does show that there are awful possibilities of Divine judgment which, at the very least, do not seem, on the face of them, as if they could be expressed in terms of love.

Chapter xiii is the chapter of parables, and two of these, the Tares and the Drag-net, speak of judgment to come. In each case the Lord Himself interpreted the parable, so that we are in no doubt as to what He meant.

"As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xiii. 40-42, R.V.

"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xiii. 49-50, R.V.

In chapter xviii the saying already noted in Matt. v. 29, 30 is repeated, and throws into relief the loving care of the heavenly Father revealed in the next verse.

"And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire. See that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xviii. 8-10, R.V.

Indeed the words of love are themselves words of warning, as appears more plainly in verse 6 (R.V.).

"Whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea."

Our Lord is saying in effect, "The Love of God watches over His little ones. See that you do not despise them, or cause them to go astray, lest His judgment deal with you." And how awful that judgment is, is then set forth in verses 8 and 9, as we have seen.

Then, at the end of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, we read,

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matt. xviii. 34, 35.

These words are the more remarkable in that they are closely connected with a command to the disciple who is wronged to forgive until seventy times seven. Man is to forgive until seventy times seven, but, in certain circum-

stances, God does not forgive but visits with judgment to the uttermost. How can this be? Does not Paul tell us to forgive one another "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. iv. 32)? For the moment we do not attempt to answer the question, but simply bring out the seeming inconsistency into clear view.

Chapter xxi contains one of the two parables (the other, of course, being that of the Prodigal Son) in which God is compared to a human father. This father has two sons, one of whom promises obedience, but disobeys in act, while the other refuses, but afterwards repents and obeys. Later on we shall consider the bearing of this parable and that of the Prodigal Son on the meaning of the Fatherhood of God.

Again, in this same chapter, in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, our Lord asks the people,

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." Matt. xxi. 40, 41.

Our Lord is far from contradicting or softening down this answer, but confirms it in even stronger terms, saying:

"Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? . . . And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (R.V., "scatter him as dust"). Matt. xxi. 42, 44.

In the remaining chapters of this Gospel there are five parables, every one of which contains the note of Judgment. In the Parable of the Marriage Feast, the king commands his servants to bind the man who came in without a wedding garment, and

"cast him out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxii. 13.

Then in the first of the Advent Parables our Lord says :

"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxiv. 48-51.

The R.V. margin has "severely scourge him" instead of "cut him asunder," but, in view of what follows, it makes little difference which rendering we take.

When the foolish virgins knock at the shut door, the bridegroom answers,

"Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Matt. xxv. 12.

The Parable of the Talents ends with the same terrible sentence as the Parable of the Wedding Feast:

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxv. 30.

The Parable, or rather perhaps Prophecy, of the Last Judgment represents the King, *identified with the Son of Man* (verses 31, 34), as saying to those on the left hand,

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." Matt. xxv. 41-46, R.V.



On this terrible note ends the last connected discourse of our Lord recorded by Matthew.

When we come to Mark we find comparatively little teaching, but there is certainly nothing to modify the general line of our Lord's revelation of God as represented by Matthew. Both in the recorded teaching and actions of our Lord we see the same patient, compassionate seeking Love of God in Mark as in Matthew. But Mark also gives us three of the most terrible sayings recorded by Matthew, and as Mark's Gospel is considered by many to be the earliest, we shall quote these sayings at length as he gives them.

"Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation" (R.V., "is guilty of an eternal sin"). Mark iii. 28, 29.

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark viii. 38.

"Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. . . . And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark ix. 42, 43, 47, 48, R.V.



A comparison with Matthew's form of these sayings will show at once that the Marcan form is the more terrible of the two.

Luke, the writer of the Gospel of the Son of Man, gives more prominence to the Love of God and the free forgiveness of the penitent sinner than Matthew, who has recorded the Gospel of Christ the King. The proclamation of free forgiveness is one of the special characteristics of this Gospel. In the first discourse which Luke records, that in the synagogue at Nazareth, our Lord applies to Himself the great prophecy of Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me . . . to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke iv. 18, 19.

Luke also contains no less than five parables of forgiveness, the Two Debtors (vii. 41, 42), the Lost Sheep (xv. 4-7), the Lost Coin (xv. 8-10), the Prodigal Son (xv. 11-32) and the Pharisee and the Publican (xviii. 9-14). The first and shortest of these is here quoted, in full, as typical of the rest.

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

All these parables stress the freedom of God's forgiveness, and the three in chapter xv tell of the joy with which He receives and pardons the repentant sinner. None of them expressly mentions the need of any atonement, or suggests any difficulty in a holy God forgiving sin.\*

\* Except for one pregnant word in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican: see page 69.

But the Evangelist who records these parables of free forgiveness also bears witness to that other strain in our Lord's teaching which we have seen in Matthew and Mark. Some of the stern sayings in Matthew are also in Luke: see Luke x. 10-15 (Matt. x. 14, 15; xi. 20-24); Luke xii. 4-9 (Matt. x. 28-33); Luke xii. 58, 59 (Matt. v. 25, 26); Luke xx. 17, 18 (Matt. xxi. 42, 44). In at least one case, the form of the saying in Luke is more solemn and terrible than the form in which it appears in Matthew (Luke xii. 4, 5; Matt. x. 28). In addition, Luke has some stern sayings peculiar to his Gospel. When the Lord was told of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, He asked His informants whether they thought that those unfortunate men were more wicked than all other Galileans, or whether the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell were more wicked than all other dwellers in Jerusalem. And in each case His own answer to the question was:

"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 5.

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke xiii. 6-9) speaks of the patience with which Divine Love bears with the sinner, but ends thus:

"and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down." Verse 9, R.V.

The same chapter contains the Parable of the Shut Door.

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are . . . depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Luke xiii. 25-28.

The Parable of Dives and Lazarus need not be quoted at length, but it may be remarked that it is impossible to repudiate the terrible imagery of the parable without repudiating Him Who spoke it. Some, indeed, have argued that our Lord was merely adopting beliefs about the future life current among His contemporaries. But, even so, surely it is unthinkable that He would have embodied such beliefs in a parable of His own had He regarded them as inconsistent with the nature and character of His Father Whom He was revealing to men? (Luke xvi. 19-31.)\*

The Parable of the Pounds does not deal so severely with the unprofitable servant as the similar Parable of the Talents in Matthew, but it closes thus:

"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Luke xix. 27.

One quotation only shall be given from John, but it is sufficient to show that the witness of his Gospel to the stern side of our Lord's teaching is in harmony with that of the other three.

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." John xv. 6.

Let us now review the evidence, remarking once again that we are not, as yet, looking for direct light on the Atonement itself, but are examining our Lord's teaching about God. What then do we find? It is perfectly true that He does represent His Father as the God of Love, One

\* See Appendix B on "The Interpretation of Parables."

Who loves the sinner, Who goes forth to seek and to save the lost, Who rejoices with all His heavenly court over one sinner that repenteth. But there is another, and sterner, line of teaching about Him which must be brought in to complete the picture; and this element is by no means a matter of a few "proof-texts." Out of twenty-two chapters in Matthew which intervene between our Lord's Baptism and the end of His teaching ministry, this stern teaching is represented in twelve, and in some of these it is the dominant note. In Luke, though less prominent than in Matthew, it is nevertheless clear enough, and there is far too much of it to be explained away as isolated or exceptional. The teaching is *there*, and, as we have seen, it is so interwoven with the teaching of Love that it is impossible to reject one without rejecting the other.

Suppose, if you will, that the Evangelists are not infallible reporters of their Masters. Yet it is not their infallibility or inspiration but their *honesty* that would be in question, if we are asked to suppose that they have falsely attributed to the Lord all this mass of teaching, and then cunningly interwoven it with the true teaching of Divine Love. In truth, writers capable of this would be capable of any dishonesty, and we might well despair of arriving at any trustworthy idea of what our Lord really taught and did, if so great a portion of His teaching could be regarded as unauthentic.

The case is not altered if misunderstanding be suggested. What can we conceive our Lord really to have said which misunderstanding could have twisted into the teaching we have been examining? The misunderstanding would have had to be gross indeed, and reporters capable of it would be worthless witnesses to any of our Lord's teaching. Nor can the force of His words be evaded by saying, as some do, that He adopted the imagery of the Judgment and the future life current among His contemporaries. Suppose that He did! He must have done so in the belief that what He so adopted was in harmony with the true nature

of His Father, which He was seeking to reveal to men. Remember the closing words of the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

"And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall *my heavenly Father* do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Matt. xviii. 34, 35.

No, on the lowest view of inspiration it is impossible to remove this stern and terrible element from the picture of God which our Lord revealed to men. A saying here or there might be rejected, but more than enough would always remain to show that our Lord's revelation of God is not one-sided, but includes judgment as well as Love.

"Who denies this?" it will be answered. "Of course God judges, but His judgments are the judgments of love." This line of argument is well worked out in *Liberal Evangelicalism* (pp. 123, 124). An ideal human father is pictured thus. Nothing his child could do would make him wish to inflict any suffering which was not solely for its good or for that of the other children. His love would be awe-inspiring in its demands; it would never rest content with anything less than the highest in his child; his holiness would be but another name for his holy love. Punishment would be directed solely towards exposing and checking evil in the child, never towards injuring him or driving him further from himself. His justice would be the refusal of his love to disregard the child's sin, and thus allow the child to think of his father as something lower than the highest. Finally, if the child should genuinely repent, the father would forgive him freely, receiving him back by progressive stages into the intimacies of fellowship, according as he was able to enter into them. Because this is the highest that we know of our own love, as we should wish it



to be, we cannot attribute less to God, otherwise He would not be God, for He would not be Love. Love is the unchangeable nature of God.

Contrast with this picture the actual revelation of God shown to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. In all the terrible series of His sayings about the Judgment there is nothing which suggests any approximation to the description of punishment as inflicted by the "ideal human father" of *Liberal Evangelicalism*. We shall see later on that there is a place in the New Testament for this conception of punishment, but it is not to be found in our Lord's picture of God's dealings with those who have rejected His love.\* True, He taught that in this life God's forgiveness is freely given to the repentant sinner, and His love joyfully welcomes him: but He also taught that if the Divine Love be despised, there is a Judgment, and we look in vain for any indication that before that judgment seat there is room for repentance or forgiveness. It is not indeed ever said that there is true repentance on the part of those condemned, and that such repentance is rejected: but rather the very ideas of repentance and forgiveness seem to be excluded. And the judgment is expressed by the Lord Jesus in terms that do not fit into the picture of the "ideal human father." The Judge addresses the condemned in language very unlike that which an ideal human father could be imagined as using to any child of his.

"Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 41, R.V.

"I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke xiii. 27.

Clearly there is something wrong with the reasoning which compares God, in *His dealings with those who reject His love*, to an ideal human father. In the next chapter we

\* See Appendix A on "Punishment inflicted by Love."

shall be considering where the fallacy lies: at present we simply point out that the Lord Jesus did not so teach.

Another attempt has been made to explain the fact that sin must be punished. Just as boiling water always scalds the body, so sin always causes "spiritual deterioration or, in theological terms, alienation from God. Such alienation, continued indefinitely, spells spiritual death; for God is the source and support of all life. . . . You may call this consequence by the name of punishment; but, if you do, it is something entirely different from the usual legal sense of punishment. For punishment by law, however wisely administered, is in all cases arbitrary and external; punishment in the sense of nature's sequence is self-acting and internal." There is, then, a law that sin leads to spiritual death, but when God freely forgives the sinner His action in no way contravenes that law, any more than a man interferes with the law of gravity when he pulls a beast out of a pit. "Forgiveness is the restoration of the sinner to the path of life, and is based on the assumption that sin is the way of death."\*

This theory sounds attractive, and we need not deny that it contains truth. God's forgiveness does undoubtedly restore the sinner to the path of life, though we do not admit that this is a complete statement of what His forgiveness is and does. Also there is undoubtedly a self-acting law that sin produces spiritual deterioration. But is that the whole truth? Measure the theory against the actual teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and its claim to be the fundamental explanation of God's dealings with man breaks down at every turn.

In the first place, if the punishment of sin is *only* a self-acting law from which at any time, short of the completion of an indefinite process of spiritual deterioration, penitence and Divine forgiveness can rescue the sinner, why should there be so many indications of a time-limit?

\* *The Atonement*, by Douglas White, M.A., M.D. (*Papers in Modern Churchmanship*, Longmans, Green and Co.), pp. 6, 7.



"Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are . . . depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke xiii. 24, 25, 27, R.V.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the foolish virgins come to the door desiring to be admitted. They are, however, too late, for the door is shut, and the bridegroom answers,

"Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Matt. xxv. 10-12.

In the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, the vinedresser sets a limit:

"Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke xiii. 8, 9.

All these three parables suggest, not the natural end of a long process of spiritual deterioration—though doubtless there has been such deterioration—but the sudden closing of a door of opportunity.

Again, our Lord's teaching always represents God's action as *direct* and *judicial*. It may be said that this is only the form of His words, and that the spiritual fact intended by Him is that God ordained and approves the self-acting spiritual law.\* Is God's love also a self-acting spiritual law? Does He not act personally at all? As we have seen, in Matt. xviii. 1-14, the Father's loving care of the little ones who believe in Jesus is directly connected with His awful judgment of those who cause them to stumble.

\* See Appendix C, "The Category of Law."

There is not a syllable to suggest that the judgment is less personal than the love. As for the statement that punishment by law is *always* "arbitrary," this may be true in all human examples, but there is no reason why it should be true when the Judge has a perfect knowledge not only of all the acts but also of all the circumstances and all the thoughts and motives of those whom He judges.

We may repeat, however, that there *is* truth in the self-acting theory, rightly understood. The punishment of sin is inherent in the nature of God and in the nature of the universe created by Him. In that sense it may be called the out-working of a natural law. *But*, since God is not a mere abstraction but a Personal Being, He is directly and personally concerned in the upholding of this law that sin brings death, and, as our Lord teaches, He does directly and judicially enforce it.

We return, then, to the problem of the two elements in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ about His Father. We remind ourselves that several of the most terrible sentences of rejection and condemnation are those which the Lord Jesus tells us He will Himself pronounce.\* He does not make the least difference between Himself and the Father when He speaks of the judgment of the lost, any more than when He speaks of the Love which seeks. What, then, can be the reason which explains how the God of Love, *Father and Son*, can act as is here shown to us? Surely it is evident that the force of our Lord's terrible sayings is only heightened by the fact that they proceeded from the mouth of Him Who also spoke the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Who was the Friend of publicans and sinners, Who commanded His disciples to forgive unto seventy times seven, Who Himself upon the Cross prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." God forbid that any words of ours should for one moment seem to depreciate or detract from the infinite love of God in Christ. With Paul we can only pray that we may be

\* Matt. vii. 22, 23.

"strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."  
Eph. iii. 18, 19, R.V.

But what are we to say when we find Him Who revealed that infinite love, no less in His life and death than in His teaching, speaking also of judgment in words so terrible that we tremble as we read them? Dare we reject the judgment teaching because we do not like it? Or dare we try to temper its terms by importing into them thoughts borrowed from the Love teaching? It can only be said that the Teacher Himself deliberately refrained from so doing. It follows, then, that the more strongly we stress His Love, the more clearly appears the tremendous and awful nature of His attitude to sin, which impels One Who is so perfectly Love to judge so terribly those who appear before His judgment throne with their sin unforgiven. And, further, the greater the emphasis laid on our Lord's teaching of free forgiveness in this life, the stronger becomes the need for an explanation of that forgiveness, in the light of His judgment upon sin unforgiven, when the day of opportunity is gone.

Thus the evidence shows that the idea of our Lord's revelation of God with which we began is one-sided. Although based on certain parts of His teaching, it ignores, in large measure, other parts. What He really does reveal about His Father, and equally about Himself, is that He is *not* "only Love," but that He is Love and also something else; and that while His Love impels Him to seek and to save, and to rejoice over the forgiven penitent, it is not His Love but that something else, stern, uncompromising, terrible, which deals with those who have rejected His Love until their day of opportunity has passed.

This conclusion may be a very unwelcome one to many minds, but, if they challenge it, it is for them to find evidence in our Lord's teaching which conflicts with it, and

we do not think that they will succeed. Let them find one statement of His which indicates that *after this life\** God deals on principles of Love with those who have thrown away their day of opportunity: indeed, let them find one reference to the Last Judgment which does not indicate the contrary.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES TO CHAPTER I

### A.—ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

This book is not directly concerned with the problem of Eternal Punishment, and therefore no attempt has been made to discuss the tremendous difficulties which we cannot but feel in our Lord's teaching on this subject. Unanswerable questions arise, for example, out of the fact that opportunity for accepting salvation and turning to God is so much less for some people than for others, even in so-called Christian countries. The writer is one of those who think that God has given a hint of how He may deal with those in heathen lands who have never heard the Gospel (Rom. ii. 12-16): but the problem of inequality of opportunity where the Gospel is not unknown still remains.

But this and other difficult questions should be postponed until we have answered the great question each of us needs to ask himself, "Am I prepared to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept His teaching as true, even such parts of it as I do not understand and by nature shrink from?" If we cannot answer that question in the affirmative, it will matter comparatively little what answer we give to any other. But if we can, then these difficulties will not be reasons for questioning the truth of what He tells us, but problems surrounding something which, however mysterious, *is true*.

\* During this life the patience of God waits, and His goodness seeks to draw men to repentance; see Matt. v. 45; Luke xiii. 8; and *cp.* Rom. ii. 4.

We all know that things sometimes happen in life which seem impossible to reconcile with the fact that the Ruler of the universe is the Holy and Loving God. But the things *have happened*: we cannot escape the difficulty by doubting them. What is done in such a case by the Christian who has proved his Lord's love is to rest in what he *knows* God to be, and not to allow a puzzle to shake his faith in a certainty. That is how we have to deal with a fact which raises unanswerable problems: we have to set over against it the equally certain fact of the love and righteousness of God, and leave the puzzles to settle themselves. If we accept the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Punishment is just such a fact, as certain as any fact in the universe, however great the problems it may raise, and we must deal with it as we deal with other facts which we do not understand.

#### B.—OUR LORD'S TEACHING ON THE CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS

In Chapters III and IV it will be shown that our Lord's teaching on God's free forgiveness does not, and cannot, rule out the possibility that forgiveness may be costly to the Forgivee. But it is also necessary to answer the objection that His teaching as to the condition on which God forgives is irreconcilable with the doctrine of salvation by faith as taught by Paul.

In Lecture I of Dean Rashdall's book, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, the following propositions are laid down:—

1. God gladly forgives the repentant sinner, on the *sole* condition of true repentance. "There is not the slightest suggestion (in Christ's teaching) that anything else but repentance is necessary—the atoning death of a Saviour, or belief in the atoning efficacy of that death or in any other article of faith" (p. 26).



2. In addition, there is no suggestion that the offer of salvation made to man while He was on earth was to be modified by fresh conditions after His death.

These propositions are used as a canon whereby to measure the compatibility with our Lord's teaching, not only of later teaching such as that of Paul, or theories of the atonement formulated by theologians, but even of certain words attributed to our Lord Himself. The most important reason for objecting to the genuineness of the words "and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45; Matt. xx. 28) is their supposed incompatibility with the main current of our Lord's teaching on forgiveness. As a result, Dean Rashdall holds that the words are either not genuine (which he thinks the more probable view) or must be interpreted in some sense quite different from that given to them traditionally: as, for instance, that our Lord's death was a piece of service or self-sacrifice for His followers such as they might very well make for one another.

Let us then examine the evidence in the first three Gospels. Our Lord's sayings about forgiveness may be divided into two groups, those in which He speaks of God's forgiveness of man generally, and those in which He Himself pronounces the forgiveness of individuals.

In the first group of sayings, where the Lord is speaking of God's forgiveness, or of entrance into His Kingdom, repentance is almost always explicitly stated as the essential condition, as, for instance, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the first preaching of the Gospel in Galilee (Matt. iv. 17). Leaving out the two disputed passages, Mark x. 45 and Matt. xxvi. 28 and parallels, it may be agreed that our Lord speaks of no condition of God's forgiveness which is not included in true repentance, except indeed in Mark i. 15: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Dr. Rashdall here questions the genuineness of the last four words, though how people could enter the kingdom of heaven if they disbelieved the good news of its existence he does not



explain. However, we have no wish to press any argument resting on four disputed words.

Conditions included in true repentance are: (a) willingness to forgive others (*e.g.*, Matt. vi. 14, 15; xviii. 21-35); and (b) humility before God and recognition of one's sinfulness (Luke v. 32; Matt. xviii. 3, 4; Luke xviii. 9-14).

Our Lord did not always express the condition: in at least one case no condition but need is mentioned at all.

"A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both." Luke vii. 41, 42, R.V.

Secondly, there are two instances in the Synoptic Gospels where our Lord Himself forgives sins, and in each case the condition of forgiveness that is actually mentioned is not repentance but faith.

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Mark ii. 5.

"And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Luke vii. 48, 50.

The faith which our Lord required was evidently faith in Himself as able to forgive, just as He required faith in Himself as able to heal when He was about to heal the body (*see, e.g.*, Matt. ix. 28). Of course, repentance is assumed. In Luke vii. 47 love is named as the evidence that there has been forgiveness: that this is the explanation of the words is shown by verses 41, 42, 50, and by the second half of verse 47 itself.

Let us now consider whether the evidence justifies Dr. Rashdall's account of it. It is quite true that our Lord nowhere speaks of faith in His atoning death as the ground of forgiveness. He does not do this even in Mark x. 45 or

Matt. xxvi. 28. But saving faith is always trust in a Person. Paul does not say, "I live by faith in the fact that the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me," but "I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. ii. 20, R.V.). Belief in the fact of our Lord's redeeming death is what gives life and warmth to our faith in Him as Saviour, yet it is the latter which actually is the means of our salvation. And we dare not so limit the grace of God as to deny that men may be saved who trust in Christ as *Saviour*, though they do not believe that He saves exactly in the manner which His Word declares. (See Dale, *The Atonement*, Lecture viii.)

What has to be considered then is not whether the full doctrine of the atonement can be proved from our Lord's teaching about forgiveness, but whether that teaching is incompatible with the doctrine that *faith in Him as Saviour* is essential to salvation. Where He Himself forgave sins, it is expressly said that He did so on the ground of faith—*i.e.*, faith in Himself as able to save (Mark ii. 5; Luke vii. 50). But in the great parables of forgiveness in Luke xv and xviii there is no mention of faith. How is this to be explained?

May we not say that *faith in the Forgiver* (*i.e.*, in God as able and willing to forgive) is necessarily implicit in our Lord's teaching about forgiveness, whether explicitly mentioned or not? We have seen that in Luke vii. 41, 52 He spoke of forgiveness without mentioning any condition at all; and that on two occasions He Himself forgave sins without alluding to repentance as an essential condition. Yet no one would think of drawing the conclusion that in any of these instances He ignored the necessity of repentance. Why? Because the *principle* is so clearly established in His teaching elsewhere that it must be understood where it is not expressly mentioned.

But surely the principle of the necessity of faith, as the condition of receiving anything from God, is sufficiently

clearly established in His teaching. Not only did He on two occasions forgive sins expressly on the ground of faith, not only did He insist on the necessity of faith when He healed men's bodies, but also He taught clearly that he who would seek any benefit from God must seek in faith (Mark xi. 24; Matt. xxi. 22). Surely the greatest of all benefits, forgiveness of sins, must be included in that rule. However earnestly a man might desire to amend his life, he could not receive forgiveness if he doubted God's willingness or power to forgive.

Already it is clear that Dean Rashdall's first proposition (that according to Christ's teaching God forgives on the *sole* ground of repentance) is untenable. Faith in the For-giver is always assumed, and sometimes stated.

It might be said, however, that this faith may simply be faith in God, not necessarily faith in Christ. It is impossible to draw a hard and fast line between the two in our Lord's teaching, even in the first three Gospels. He Himself said that He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke xix. 10). He therefore certainly regarded Himself as Saviour in some sense. Moreover, He taught that salvation is intimately connected with acceptance of Himself as Master and Lord, an acceptance which issues in obedience to His will and in putting Him before all else, even before the closest human relationships (Matt. x. 32-39).

On these grounds we conclude that, even if He did not expressly teach (as the Fourth Gospel says that He did—*e.g.*, John iii. 16-18) that faith in Himself as Saviour is necessary to salvation, it is quite impossible to maintain that this doctrine is a contradiction of His teaching or an illegitimate development of it. On the contrary, we may say that our Lord's teaching of forgiveness was a perfect preparation for that fuller doctrine of the sense in which He saves which could be developed only after His death.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

"Do you then actually wish us to understand that God treats His children worse than an ideal human father would treat his children? Do you suggest that our Lord's teaching implies this?"

This objection raises a very important question. Two great misconceptions lie at the root of much modern teaching about God. The first manifests itself in a misunderstanding of the great truth that God is love. We have already examined some of the arguments used. We turn now to examine the second, which consists in an equally serious misunderstanding of the Fatherhood of God.

Our Lord frequently spoke of "your Father," "your heavenly Father," and He taught us to pray to "Our Father": from this it is inferred that He meant that God is the Father of all mankind, and that therefore the unrepentant sinner's relationship to Him is that of the disobedient and ungrateful child rather than that of the rebellious subject.

If this interpretation of our Lord's teaching about the Fatherhood of God were valid, then, indeed, His sayings about judgment would be a strange mystery, and we might well wonder how the two elements in His teaching could be reconciled. But let us enquire to whom our Lord was speaking when He referred to God as "your Father," and whom it was that He taught to pray "Our Father, which art in heaven."

The Sermon on the Mount speaks of "your Father" or "thy Father" some fourteen times, but that Sermon was addressed, at least primarily, to disciples.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples

came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them." Matt. v. 1, 2, R.V.

The crowds seem indeed to have gathered round outside the ring of disciples, for we read at the end of the Sermon that

"the multitudes were astonished at his teachings, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." Matt. vii. 28, 29, R.V.

But the Sermon itself contains abundant evidence that it was addressed to disciples, or at the very least to would-be disciples. For example:

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. . . . Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 11, 13, 14, 16.

And it would be futile to address to any but disciples such commands as:

"If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." Matt. v. 29, R.V.

Or again.

"Love your enemies . . . and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. v. 44, 45.\*

\* For the last part of verse 45, see note on page 39.

Would our Lord address such a command to those who were not His own people? Do not we know ourselves that nothing but Divine grace can enable us, or anyone else, to keep such a command?

The Lord's Prayer itself is found in Luke's Gospel as an instruction to the disciples, who asked Him to teach them to pray "as John also taught his disciples" (Luke xi. 1-4). In Matthew it is included in the Sermon on the Mount, as part of a series of instructions on almsgiving, prayer and fasting, which would simply be meaningless unless addressed to those who recognized the Lord as their Master. There is one other place, where it is said that our Lord addressed "the multitudes and His disciples," and it is interesting to notice that He frames His language in terms applicable only to disciples.

"Then spake Jesus to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying, . . . Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ." Matt. xxiii. 1, 8-10, R.V.

The words are addressed to the multitudes and to the disciples, for the Lord wished the people to hear and to learn: yet the language used assumed full discipleship in those *primarily* addressed, "one is your teacher . . . one is your master, even the Christ." Clearly, therefore, the words "One is your Father" in this context cannot be taken as evidence that our Lord taught that all men are God's children, whether disciples or not.

If we go right through the Gospels and examine every instance, other than those already quoted, where the Lord uses the terms "your Father," "thy Father," it will be found without exception that it is expressly stated that He is addressing His own disciples. Two instances are found



in our Lord's address to the Twelve before He sent them out to preach.

"Be not anxious how or what ye shall speak. . . . For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Matt. x. 19, 20, R.V.

The other instance, Matt. x. 28-33, has been quoted already in the last chapter as one of the most striking examples of the close interweaving of Love and Judgment in our Lord's teaching. Here the points to notice are, first, that "your heavenly Father," without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, is the Father of *the disciples*, to whom they can safely trust themselves when threatened with cruelty or death in time of persecution. And, secondly, while it is true that the disciple who is tempted to deny his Master is warned to fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell, it is also made clear that he would not go there *as disciple or as a child of God*; for if he denies his Master, the Master will deny him!

The next passage is of solemn and tremendous import. The Lord is explaining to His disciples the Parable of the Tares.

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. xiii. 41-43, R.V.

There is no hint of the Father-relation in the case of "things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity": but immediately "the righteous" are mentioned, God is spoken of as "their Father."

The next instance is in chapter xviii. The disciples had asked the Master "who is greatest in the kingdom of

heaven?" In the course of His reply to this question He tells them the Parable of the Lost Sheep, and adds:

"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."  
Matt. xviii. 14.

We have already quoted the only remaining instance in Matthew, in chapter xxiii.

In Mark there is only one instance, in our Lord's reply to Peter, as spokesman of the Twelve, when he questioned Him about the withered fig tree.

. "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them. And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against anyone; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." Mark xi. 24, 25, R.V.

In Luke the Sermon on the Plain contains one mention of "your Father."

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Luke vi. 36.

But the Sermon in Luke is expressly addressed to the disciples:

"And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said . . ." Luke vi. 20.

Although at the end the Evangelist says:

"After he had ended all his sayings in the ears of the people, he entered into Capernaum." Luke vii. 1.

Thus our Lord is represented as teaching His disciples in the hearing of the people, doubtless with the full intention

that the latter should profit from what they heard, and be drawn to become His disciples. Yet it is clearly implied that the language used must be understood as applying to the disciples who were primarily addressed, and not to the listening people outside the inner ring.

The next instance is included in the teaching which immediately follows the Lord's Prayer, and, as we saw, Luke expressly states that this Prayer was given to the disciples alone.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13.

The last instance in Luke is in chapter xii, in the course of teaching introduced by the words, "And he said unto his disciples" (xii. 22).

"All these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. . . . Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke xii. 30, 32.

Here the words "little flock" corroborate the statement in verse 22 that the Lord was addressing the disciples.

We see, then, that, wherever the words "your Father" are found in the Gospels, they are in teaching addressed to disciples. In almost every case they are spoken to disciples only, and where others are mentioned, they appear as listeners outside the inner ring rather than as those to whom the teaching was primarily addressed. But this is not all. There are several instances where our Lord speaks to the multitudes or the Pharisees, and it is clear that He is addressing them and not His own disciples. In every such instance the words "your Father" or "thy Father" are conspicuous by their absence: if God is mentioned as

Father at all, it is as "*my Father*." See Matt. xi and xii\* and Luke iv. 21-27 and xi. 14-52. The last passage is remarkable because of the strong contrast between the first thirteen verses of the chapter, which were addressed to disciples, and the last thirty-nine verses, which were not.

Far be it from us to suggest that the Lord was not full of love to those who were not His disciples. He was the Friend of sinners, the Son of Man Who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Nevertheless it is a striking fact that He consistently refrained from speaking to men about God as their heavenly Father until they had become His disciples. We judge, then, that when John and Paul tell us that to become children of God is the high privilege given to those who "receive" the Lord Jesus (John i. 12), who are "sons through faith" (Gal. iii. 26), who are "redeemed" (Gal. iv. 5), or who "are led by the Spirit of God" (Rom. viii. 14), they are only following the implied example of our Lord Himself. In particular we are bound to notice that the Lord never once speaks of those who are condemned at the Judgment as children of God, or of God dealing with them as Father. On the contrary, as we have seen, He says that He will disown them, and will say, "I never knew you," if they should claim to be His. Thus, the objection with which the present chapter opened is beside the mark: it rests upon a misunderstanding of our Lord's teaching.

But there are two answers to the preceding argument which must be considered. First, it may be said that the argument takes for granted that our Lord's sayings were all actually spoken on the occasions with which the Evangelists connect them: apart from this assumption, how do we know that sayings which seem to be addressed to disciples were not really part of our Lord's teaching addressed to people in general?

\* Notice especially Matt. xii. 50: intimate relationship to Jesus Christ, of course, carries with it sonship of God.

In reply, we need only point out that many of the sayings which refer to God as "your Father" contain in themselves, or their own immediate context, plain evidence that they were addressed to disciples. For instance:

"Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt. v. 14, 16.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke xii. 32.

Therefore, if the objection is to be supported, it must be assumed either that the Evangelists deliberately grouped our Lord's sayings so that He should never speak to any but disciples of "your Father," or else that this marked consistency has come about by accident. Readers must judge for themselves what is the true interpretation of the facts. It may be asked, however, why, if our Lord was in the habit of speaking to the people about God as their Father, is there no clear trace of this habit in the Gospels as we have them? And what possible evidence can anyone have of such a habit apart from the Gospels?

In the second place we are asked if we have not forgotten the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and, in a less degree of importance, the Parable of the Two Sons (Matt. xxi. 28-32). Let us consider the latter parable first. The Pharisees are compared to a son who made profession of obedience to his father's command, but disobeyed in fact, while the publicans and harlots are compared to a son who refused to obey, but afterwards "repented and went." The father doubtless represents God, but, apart from one command, he says and does nothing, and the interest of the parable centres in the sons. Clearly the purpose of the parable is not to show man's relationship to God, but to make it plain that obedience in act is what He values, and that lip-service which does not issue in true obedience is worthless in His



sight. Unless our Lord's teaching elsewhere warrants such a conclusion, it would be most unreasonable to build upon the mere fact that the two types of people are compared to "sons," the tremendous conclusion that all men are children of God, whether obedient or disobedient, whether hypocritical or true. If our Lord really meant to teach this, surely He would not have hinted it indirectly through the imagery of a parable intended to teach something quite different. He would have said it in plain terms, and made it a prominent feature of His teaching, which is just what He did not do.

But the Parable of the Prodigal Son is supposed to be unquestionable evidence for the universal Fatherhood of God. Again the Pharisee and the publican are compared to two sons, one of whom stays at home and leads a respectable but self-righteous life, while the other goes off to the far country, and lives there in sin. But the father's part is by no means passive. When, at last, the sinful son repents and returns to his father's house, the latter, who has evidently been watching every day for his return, sees him a great way off, runs to meet him, and welcomes him with free and joyful forgiveness. Is not this clear proof, we are asked, that all men are children of God, and that when a sinner repents he does not *become* a child of God, but only enters into the privileges of sonship, which previously he had cast away?

Let us see what was the occasion of this parable. The Pharisees had been grumbling at our Lord for preaching the Gospel to publicans and sinners: they believed that such people were defiled and accursed, outside the range of God's love and mercy. Therefore our Lord speaks three parables, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son, all showing God's love for the sinner and His joy over him when he repents. The Prodigal Son, in addition, brings in the thought of the elder son, outwardly "righteous," but unloving and self-satisfied, and shows how God rejoices over the repentant sinner rather than over such a



one. Not for a moment would we have it thought that we regard this parable as a difficulty which must be explained away. Its message of free and glad forgiveness is indeed a most vital element in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But a mass of false consequences have been drawn from this parable through trying to make it teach what it was not intended to teach. Every parable has its main purpose, and it is dangerous to explain the imagery of a parable to mean something outside that purpose. The importance of this principle is most obvious when the interpretation does not tally with the general sense of our Lord's teaching elsewhere. For example, it would be possible, by ignoring this principle, to represent the Parable of the Unjust Steward as justifying fraud; and the words "compel them to come in" in the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke xiv. 23) have been quoted in support of religious persecution.\* Now in the case of the Prodigal Son, the point of the parable is not the universal Fatherhood of God but His all-embracing love, whereby people who have sinned, no matter how grossly, are gladly received and freely forgiven when they truly turn to Him. Notice also that this parable is not concerned with one who persists to the end in refusing to repent;† other parables, in which God is not represented as a Father, deal with that case. This parable is the parable of the forgiveness of the repentant sinner, whom God does indeed receive as a father might receive a long-lost child.

"But is not the prodigal said to return to his father? Was he not his son before he left home, and all the time he was in the far country?" Yes, the sinner is certainly com-

\* See Appendix B on "The Interpretation of Parables."

† Was not the elder brother an impenitent sinner? In one sense, yes: but in the parable he, like the ninety and nine in the fold, is shown to us rather from the Pharisees' own point of view as the just person who needs no repentance. To have done otherwise would have distracted attention from the main thought of the parable, the free forgiveness of the Prodigal.

*pared* to a son who has wandered from his father's home, and God's reception of the repentant sinner is *compared* to that of a loving human father receiving the wanderer home. But suppose now

(1) that the teaching of John and Paul about the Fatherhood of God is true; that our Lord did, of set purpose, refrain from referring to God as the Father of any but those who owned Him as Master; suppose even that He taught "*Ye must be born again.*"

And suppose also, what no one will deny,

(2) that one of the highest human analogies to the love of God for the sinner is a father's love for an erring son, and that the father's longing for his son's return is a faint but true picture of the Divine longing for the sinner to turn to Him.

Is there anything contradictory between these two sets of suppositions? Why should not both be equally true? Those who believe the first find no difficulty whatever in the second! And if the second be true, and our Lord wished to exhibit this comparison in a parable, what better parable could He devise for the purpose than that of the Prodigal Son? The parable must be drawn from the facts of natural human life, in which people are only born once, so that if the repentant sinner whom God receives is to be represented as a son, he *must* have been a son from the beginning. It is essential to the framing of the story. But this cannot contradict the possibility (at least) that our first supposition is true, and that in the spiritual reality there is no real sonship but by "adoption" or by being "born again."

Notice that the parable does not represent the father as *acting* as a father towards the prodigal while he was in the far country. He loved him, he looked out for him, so that, when the boy returned, his father saw him afar off. But the father does not *act* till the boy returns, he does not go to the far country to seek his son. Why? Because God does not seek the sinner? No indeed. *But the active love*

*of God towards the unrepentant sinner is not shown under the image of father and son, but of shepherd and sheep, or of owner and coin. Thus the parable compares God to a father in two respects only, the father's longing for his child's return, and his glad reception of him when he does return.*

Still less does the parable give any hint that the relationship of God to the *finally* unrepentant sinner is to be represented by that of father to child. That relationship is wholly outside the purview of this parable. So, therefore, we conclude that the objection with which this chapter begins is beside the mark, and that no valid argument from the Fatherhood of God can be brought forward as a set-off, or contradiction, to our Lord's teaching about the Divine wrath and justice.

## CHAPTER III

### LOVE AND LIGHT

It is now time that we should see whether the New Testament has any explanation of the strange double picture of God which we find in our Lord's teaching. That picture certainly needs explanation. How is it possible for the same God to be "your heavenly Father," without Whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and to be the Judge Who "after he hath killed is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"? The Lord Jesus represents Himself, too, as acting with a sternness indistinguishable from that which He attributes to His Father. And to add to our perplexity, one of His sternest parables is in the immediate context of a command to the disciples to forgive unto seventy times seven (Matt. xiii. 41, 42; xviii. 21-35; xxv. 31-46).

Let us see if John, the Apostle of Love, can help us to find the answer to these questions by his teaching in his first Epistle. We discover first that, twice over, he tells us that "God is Love" (1 John iv. 8, 16). It has been argued that we are nowhere told that God *is* holiness or justice, but we are told that He *is* Love, so that in that simple phrase we have the final explanation of the Divine nature: God is Love, only Love, and all His attributes and activities are simply functions of His Love.

But if we read the Epistle through, we find that the writer does not say only that God is Love, he says that He is something else as well:

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."  
1 John i. 5.

Here, then, we have two statements about the essential nature of God: "God is Love" and "God is Light." What is meant by "Light"?

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." 1 John i. 6.

Literal light is not only the opposite of darkness, but cannot coexist with it. Where a light is, within the range of its influence there is no darkness. Even so, God and sin cannot exist together. Not only is it true that in God there is no darkness at all, but also it is impossible for those who walk in darkness to have fellowship with Him. But "darkness" is clearly seen, from the verse quoted, to be the state of those who "lie, and do not the truth." Light, then, is Holiness, the principle of opposition to sin and separation from it: and although it is true that the actual words "God is holiness" do not occur in the Bible, the meaning of them is here in this saying of the Apostle of Love.

There is no evidence, moreover, that he put less weight on one than on the other of his two great statements about God. There is no ground at all in his writings for supposing that he would have accepted the position that Light was only a function of Love. But some, perhaps, would not be satisfied to take this writer as a final authority, so let us rather turn back to the teaching of our Lord, and see whether the double statement about God in this Epistle will help us to understand the twofold picture of Him in the Gospels.

It is needless to go right through the chain of quotations which we examined in Chapter I. But reference to them will show that the Love of God is shown as continually active in this present life, longing for the salvation of men (Matt. xxiii. 37), calling them to come to Him (*e.g.*, Matt. xi. 28-30; xxii. 3, 4), seeking them as a shepherd seeks the lost sheep (Luke xv. 3-7; xix. 10), bearing patiently with them and extending their day of opportunity (Luke xiii. 6-8), welcoming them with heavenly joy when they do repent (Luke xv. 7, 10, 20-32). And the Holiness, the Light, is also shown to us as active in this present life. What else

explains the terrific demands which the Lord makes upon His disciples? Not only does He demand that they should cut out of their lives everything that causes them to stumble, even though it were as a hand or foot or eye, lest keeping it they be cast into hell (Mark ix. 43-48), but also the most valued earthly ties and affections must yield first place to Him.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." Matt. x. 37, 38, R.V.

On another occasion He put this demand in even stronger words. Surely no one would have dared to put such phrases as these into His mouth if He had not said them:

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke xiv. 26.

Compare this teaching with the picture of the "ideal human father" in *Liberal Evangelicalism*. "His love would be awe-inspiring in its demands; it would never rest content with anything less than the highest in his child; his holiness would be another name for his holy love" (p. 123). We need not question that there is truth in this way of putting things. It is not the whole truth, however, and it is not at all the way our Saviour presents the claims of God's Holiness to us. We must be altogether His. We must be ready to let Him cut out of our lives anything, however much a part of us, which comes between us and Him, not simply because God can be content with nothing but the best in His children, but because, otherwise, we cannot be His at all. If we cling to sin, or make an idol of



anything, we are in danger of hell. Our lot will be with those whom God's Holiness cannot take into fellowship with Him.

So far, then, we see Love and Light acting independently. Love calls to repentance, Love suffers long and is kind, Love seeks and woos. In a parable like the Prodigal Son, or in our Lord's appeal to the weary and heavy laden, nothing is said about the judgment of sin or the impossibility that light and darkness should dwell together. But, side by side with this, we have seen the uncompromising nature of the demands which Light makes upon the disciple; demands which Love does not modify either in themselves, or in their consequences. Here, indeed, is a problem which calls for an answer.

Our survey in Chapter I showed us also that, in our Lord's teaching of judgment, there is no attempt to modify judgment by Love. Sometimes, indeed, the most beautiful message of Love is placed right up against the most terrible warning of judgment, without any sign that the Speaker is aware of any inconsistency between the two. And judgment is the reaction of light against darkness, of holiness against sin.

It would seem, then, from our Lord's own teaching, that Light and Love have their own spheres of action, and as far as the passages go that we have examined, neither seems to modify the other. There is indeed one great saying of our Lord, not hitherto quoted, which shows most clearly the separate action of Holiness and Love.

"And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon an-

other; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation." Luke xix. 41-44, R.V.

Here we have Divine Love faced by the iron opposition of human free-will. What does Love do? It does not force down that opposition, for God ever respects man's free-will; nor does it save despite the opposition, for that also may not be. *Love can do nothing but weep, while judgment acts.* The Lord saw what was coming on Jerusalem, because she refused to know the time of her visitation, and, though He was the Almighty, He could not stop it. He was not only Love but also Light, and, if Love is rejected until the "day of visitation" is past, then Light must act alone.

No more overwhelming or terrible proof could be offered that Love does not, cannot, override Holiness in its own sphere of action than this lament of the Love of God over the judgment which it could not prevent. People ask, "How can the Love of God send the worst sinner to hell?" In no cold, dogmatic spirit, but trembling and with bated breath, we answer, The Love of God does not send people to hell: but if that Love has been slighted, ignored or rejected, then there must come a time when Love can only weep, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and judgment must take its course.

But what of that command to forgive unto seventy times seven? If we are wronged by fellow-sinners, what is it that we have to forgive compared to what God has forgiven us? The Lord Jesus illustrates the ratio of the two debts by comparing the one to 100 denarii, say 70 shillings, and the other to 10,000 talents, say 2½ million pounds. And by far the most important part of the sin against us is that it was a sin, not against us, but against God, and against His holy Law. Above all, which of us can say that we are light and in us is no darkness at all? We *must* forgive, even to seventy times seven, for we have been forgiven "all that debt," and we depend all the time on that same forgiving

love. But, when we consider *Him*, whose nature is Light as well as Love, is not the real question how it comes about that He can forgive at all?

If it be true, as our Lord's words so clearly show, that Love does not override Light, how does God forgive sin? The great Parables of Forgiveness in Luke xv show Him forgiving it, and doing so with joy unspeakable amid the rejoicings of heaven. But not one of them, not even that of the Prodigal Son, explains how it is possible for Him to do so and to be the same God Who says elsewhere, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." To explain this is outside the purpose of those parables, but some explanation there must be.

But before attempting to answer the question here raised, let us seek to assess the value of the results so far reached. They have been obtained without any assumption of inspiration, on no further assumption indeed than that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels were honest, and that a substantially true idea of our Lord's teaching can be obtained from them. If this assumption is denied, we can at least reply that those who deny it have no sort of right to base any argument on our Lord's revelation of God. For there would be left no basis, except a purely subjective one, on which to build any notion of what that revelation actually was. Either, then, we know nothing more solid than our own fancies of what Jesus Christ taught, or His revelation of God was, as His own words, recorded in the Gospels, have shown, in the fullest accord with the twofold description of Him in the First Epistle of John, "God is Love" and "God is Light."

But many people will find it very hard to accept this conclusion. They have been accustomed so to dwell on the bright side of our Lord's teaching that they have come to think of the other side as consisting of a few proof-texts which must somehow be a mistake! And now it is apparent that the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ is twofold, and that the stern side of it cannot be eliminated from it with-

out tearing it to pieces, and making it altogether other than what it was when He preached it.

But *how* can we believe that our Lord Jesus really compared Himself to a stone which scatters as dust those on whom it falls, or that He will one day say such words as, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels"? The heart shrinks back from believing it, and is apt to put pressure on the reason to reject the evidence! In so far as such shrinking truly comes from love of humanity and not from minimizing sin, it is at any rate less displeasing to God than a complacent satisfaction in the fact of hell. We may even say that a shrinking awe in the presence of our Lord's stern teaching is a far-off echo of His own weeping over doomed Jerusalem.

But, however much we may shrink, dare we really refuse to believe *Him*? After all, facts are no less facts if people are so foolish as to refuse to recognize them. Our Saviour must know the truth, and just because He is Love He could never say such things unless Eternal Truth were exactly so. We turn to the objectors and say to them, "Are you going to reject the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? Do you claim that you understand the nature and will of God better than He did?"

But, if we *do* accept His teaching, it then follows that there must be some overwhelming and supremely important reason which explains why a God of Love should also act in severe judgment of sin. That reason has been revealed to us in John's illuminating phrase. He is *Light* as well as Love; and we see that *His will to destroy evil cannot be overruled by His Love, because it is as much His essential nature as Love is.*

This being so, to speak of the wrath of God, as Paul does, is *not* dishonouring to God, but is simply in harmony with the Master's teaching; nor can the wrath be explained away as a kind of function of Love. We see, too, that the great foundation objection to the Pauline teaching about the

Atonement is gone. Other important difficulties there are, which must be answered in their place, but the supreme overriding objection has utterly vanished. We are in the position where we not only may but *must* ask humbly with Job, "How can man be just with God?" (Job ix. 2, R.V.).



## CHAPTER IV

### PAUL'S EXPLANATION

WE take up, then, the question raised so often as an objection, "Why is there need of a blood-sacrifice, when our Lord represents God as forgiving freely and gladly without a hint of anything being necessary to that forgiveness beyond the true repentance of the sinner?" We may be grateful to the objector for raising this point. For, as we have seen, this glad and free forgiveness by the same God who can say "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity," does imperatively require explanation. For unless the opposition of His Holiness to sin is awful beyond our imagination, it is impossible to suppose that He, Who is Love, could so sentence any of His creatures without giving any hint that they have further opportunity for repentance and so for escaping their doom. But if, or rather since, His opposition to sin is so awful, how can the repentance of the prodigal alone explain His forgiving it, and not only so, but forgiving it so gladly? The answer to this question will be found to point straight to Calvary, and to Calvary as Paul sees it!

For it comes to this. Is our repentance, however thorough and sincere, sufficient by itself to blot out His opposition to our sin? Is the past finished with, simply by our changed attitude? True, He has been loving us all the time, long before we thought of turning to Him. But His love does not override His holiness, for, if it *could* do so, there could not possibly be a hell, or at any rate such as our Lord reveals it.

"But, after all, would not a father forgive his children as soon as they repent, just as the father did in the parable?" We have seen that the relationship of father to child, which so beautifully suffices for the purposes of that parable, does



not and cannot explain the whole truth of the relationship of God to man. The relationship *can* be that of Father and child, and is so when a certain condition is fulfilled. But alas, it can also be that of King and rebel (Luke xix. 27; Matt. xxii. 1-7) or Judge and criminal (Matt. xiii. 41-43; xxv. 41-46). Moreover, a human father is himself a sinner, and a part of God's creation, and has no sort of right to withhold forgiveness from his repentant child.

No, that parable, which was intended for quite another purpose, as we saw in Chapter II, does not explain how God's eternal opposition to sin is overcome. It does not so much as mention it. But since that eternal opposition most certainly exists, it is clear that our Lord presupposed a way whereby that problem has been dealt with: and it is that way which we are seeking. We must find, therefore, a place where Love and Holiness meet, and each is fully satisfied, before we can find a satisfactory explanation of that free and glad forgiveness.

Paul names such a place. We shall quote him, without at this stage assuming any authority for him beyond that of a great Christian thinker of the first century. Our task will be to discover whether he presents a solution of the problem which gives full value to what we have seen to be our Lord's teaching about God, about man, and about forgiveness, and yet satisfies all the conditions. If we find that it does, we may well ask whence Paul arrived at that solution, if it were not by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

This is what Paul says:

"All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to shew his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the shewing, I say, of his righteousness at this present

season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." Rom. iii. 23-26, R.V.

As we read these words we notice first how tremendous is the importance, for Paul, of God's righteousness or justice. That God can punish seems to the modern man to need elaborate explanation: that He can forgive seems to Paul to be what needs to be explained. But that is exactly the point at which we arrived in our study of our Lord's teaching. If God, Who is Love, can so punish as our Lord teaches that He does, then the claims of His Holiness must be so tremendous as to suggest the need of an explanation how He can forgive at all. So far, then, Paul is in agreement with his Master's teaching about God.

Next we notice that instead of "forgive" Paul says "justify." What that word means is evident enough from the non-theological use of it in Isa. v. 22, 23.

"Woe unto them . . . which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him."

In return for a bribe, the unjust judge acquits the guilty, pronouncing him innocent before the law: and, in like manner, he condemns the innocent, taking away his "righteousness," that is, his innocence before the law. Paul tells us here that *God* justifies the sinner (not, of course, for reward but for a very different reason). We know that, even had no bribe been in question, God would have condemned those judges for "justifying the wicked":\* and yet, for a reason that He deems sufficient, He Himself "justifies the ungodly" (Rom. iv. 5). And that He does this we know, not on Paul's authority alone, for that is the meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son and of every act of gracious forgiveness from the beginning to

\* See also Prov. xvii. 15, R.V., "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord."

this day. Someone has been forgiven who deserved to be destroyed. But this could only be if his sin has somehow been removed, treated as if it had not been. And this is to justify, or acquit, the ungodly.

It is easy to scoff at Paul's legal terms, and say contemptuously, "I have no interest in the category of law." But what if God has a very deep interest in the category of law! If He is indeed Light as well as Love, how could it be otherwise?\*

Thirdly, we notice that Paul, who feels so intensely that God *must* be "just," is satisfied that He has indeed found the way to be both "just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." God can "justify the wicked" and yet be "just." If this be true, Paul has found a place where Love and Light can blend together, where both can be perfectly satisfied. Hitherto we have seen them acting separately, as when Love wept over Jerusalem but could not avert the coming doom. But here we see Love freely justifying the sinner by grace, and yet God is just, which means that His Holiness is satisfied, His Law has not been broken.

What explanation, then, does Paul offer of this paradox—for nothing less it is—that God can acquit the guilty and yet be just? He says that we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood." This word "propitiation" arouses antagonism in some people, because they misunderstand it. They think Paul means that an angry God is made loving and well-disposed to us by the sacrifice of His Son—and so they reject Paul! But this is a distortion of Paul's meaning.

"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8, R.V.

John puts the same thought even more clearly, in connection with the word "propitiation" itself.

\* See Appendix C on "The Category of Law."

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."  
 1 John iv. 8-10.

Here, as in Rom. iii. 25, it is God Who takes the initiative in providing the propitiation, and it is because of His infinite love that He does so. Nay, more, it is exactly in this that the most perfect manifestation of God's love is given to us. "God is love . . . herein is love . . . that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "Propitiation," therefore, cannot mean that there was ever a time when God did not love us.\*

And yet it is equally mistaken to explain away propitiation as though it meant nothing in particular.† We have seen that God is not only Love but also Light, and, as such, must and does will the destruction of evil. In order that God may be just and yet forgive sin, His holy wrath against sin must be removed by a "propitiation for sin." This fact is equally true with the other great fact

\* Dale in his great work on the Atonement, Lecture V., has pointed out that the expression to "propitiate God" is never used in Old or New Testament—the passive "be propitiated to me," in Luke xviii. 13, is rather different—but the phrase is rather to "make atonement (or propitiation) for sin." The Hebrew word rendered "make atonement"—e.g., Exod. xxxii. 30—is rendered in the Septuagint as "make propitiation." So also in 1 John, "a propitiation for our sins." This mode of speaking avoids any suggestion that God did not already love the sinner, and, at the same time, acknowledges the justice of the wrath which the propitiation is designed to remove.

† E.g., that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, in the sense that "as a matter of actual experience the vision of the Cross does deal with the guilt of sin, and assure men that they have been forgiven" (*Liberal Evangelicalism*, p. 137). How can "propitiation" possibly refer to the subjective effect of the Cross on us? Are we "propitiated"?

that He has loved us from the beginning, and has always desired to save us, if we would let Him. Look at the Revised Version margin of Luke xviii. 13: "God, be propitiated to me a sinner." The Greek word is *hilasthēti*, from the same root as the words rendered "propitiation," which are *hilastērion* in Romans and *hilasmos* in 1 John. The words in Luke form part of the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican: it was the Lord Jesus Himself Who put them into the mouth of the Publican, and clearly approved them. He represents the Publican as knowing himself to be deserving of the wrath of God, and humbly praying Him to "be propitiated" to him.

Here again, then, Paul is in harmony with his Master's teaching when he speaks of a propitiation as the means whereby God could be just and justify the sinner who believes in Christ. What is called the "Pauline" doctrine of the Atonement is commonly objected to chiefly because it is dishonouring to God to suppose for a moment that there is need of a propitiation in order that He may forgive. It is now clear that this objection cannot be sustained without disregarding the authority, not only of Paul, but of the Lord Jesus. And this conclusion is based not on one or two proof-texts but on the essential meaning of His teaching as a whole.\*

The writer in *Liberal Evangelicalism* who drew a picture of the ideal human father, clinched his argument as follows: "Such is the delivery of our search into the noblest meanings of our own love as we should wish it to be. Just because it is the highest that we know, we cannot attribute less to God, otherwise He would not be God, for He would not be Love. Love is the unchangeable nature of God."† There are a great many people whose objections to the Pauline (or rather New Testament) doctrine of the Atonement are based, like this writer's, on a picture of God which

\* The words of Luke xviii. 13 are a valuable confirmation of the argument, but are far from being its main foundation.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 124.



*they have drawn for themselves*, and, supposing it to be "the highest that we know," they are sure that the reality must agree with it, or at least can differ from it only by fulfilling perfectly what they have imperfectly suggested. Then, if they try to find support for their views in the Word of God at all, they bring to their study of it this previously formed idea of God, and disregard, or reject, whatever they find in the Bible which is too obviously out of harmony with that idea.

We would earnestly plead with all such to pause and reconsider the position. It may seem attractive to argue that from a consideration of the virtues of an ideal man we can form our idea of God, because whatever is highest in man must be highest in God. But (unless the ideal man chosen is none other than the God-Man Himself) the argument rests on the fallacy that the relations between fellow-sinners and fellow-creatures are of the same kind as those between them and the Eternal Creator and Judge. For one great difference in the two relationships see Rom. xii. 19, 20. But, above all, if an idea of God, formed on that principle, disagrees fundamentally with the message of our Lord Himself (to say nothing of the rest of the New Testament teaching), there must be something very wrong, either with the conception of the ideal man, or with the argument that God must be like him, or with both. Surely we must trust the Divine Son of God to give us a true representation of His Father. It follows that we must form our idea of God from His teaching, rather than form our idea of His teaching from a previously conceived idea of God.

But, as we have shown, if we do accept His teaching, there is no ground on which we can oppose the proposition implied in Paul's words, that a "propitiation" was necessary in order that God might be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

Now we can consider Paul's statement as to what, or



Who, the propitiation is. "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood." We are not so much concerned at present with the words "through faith" which refer, of course, to the means whereby we receive and appropriate what the Lord did for us. At present we are thinking rather of what He did. We notice, first, that, according to Paul the *Lord Jesus* was the propitiation for our sins. We have already seen that John agrees with him in this. And, secondly, He was the propitiation *by His blood*—that is, by His blood poured out in death, the blood of the Cross (Col. i. 20). Somehow the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross availed for us as the propitiation, "to show his righteousness . . . that he might be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."

Here is the very statement at which so many stumble. Yet, *if there must be a propitiation*, so that God can justify the sinner and yet be just (and it seems to follow from our Lord's teaching as well as that of Paul, that there must be), what other propitiation can anyone suggest? Surely it is only God Himself Who can give an answer of any value to the question *what* propitiation could make it possible for Him to justify the sinner? Has He then given the answer through Paul? Even now we shall not take it for granted that this is so, but we shall first see whether Paul is consistent with himself in his teaching on this subject, and then see what confirmatory evidence there is in the rest of the New Testament, and above all in the Gospels, for our belief that he is indeed speaking the words of God to us here.

As we read his writings, we notice that he is continually telling his readers that Christ's death was "for us," "on our behalf." Now these words in themselves could be explained away, and have been. But the meaning that Paul himself attached to them is made clear by other sayings which show in what sense Paul believed that Christ died for us.

"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him." Rom. v. 8, 9, R.V.

As in the third chapter he said that the Lord was a propitiation by His blood, so here he says His death was somehow the means whereby we were justified, counted guiltless before the Law. The doom which we deserved was lifted from us "by his blood." In *that* sense He died "for us." When, therefore, we read in the same Epistle that the Lord was "delivered up for our trespasses" (iv. 25, R.V.), "died for the ungodly" (v. 6), was "delivered up for us all" (viii. 32), we see in what sense the words were meant. A yet clearer light will be thrown on these words as we examine further.

"Our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ." 1 Cor. v. 7, R.V.

The Passover lamb was slain, and the blood sprinkled on the doorposts, that the first-born might not perish.

"When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Exod. xii. 13.

Paul means, then, that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is a protection from the destroying wrath, even as the blood of the Passover lamb was. Remember always, however, that the term "destroying wrath" does not contradict the fact that God is Love and "hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner": He is both Love and Light.

"Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, R.V.

This glorious saying fits in perfectly with the teaching of Rom. iii and v and 1 Cor. v. For if indeed the Lord's death was the direct means of obtaining our forgiveness and protecting us from the wrath which we deserve, then truly we have been bought, body, soul and spirit, by Him who saved us by His blood, and we belong to Him. But the same consequence does not follow if the Lord's death was only the result of the wickedness of His earthly enemies, and a proof to us (in some mysterious way) of God's love for us, as some would have us believe. However, this subject belongs to a later stage in the discussion.

When, therefore, in the same Epistle Paul writes of the weak brother "for whom Christ died," and says that he passed on to the Corinthians first of all that which he also received, "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures," again we understand in what sense he meant those words—namely, that Christ's death was in such sense "for our sins," that we were utterly bought, and became His property and no longer our own.

In the Epistle to the Galatians we have this tremendous statement:

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Gal. iii. 13, R.V.

It is no doubt possible by sufficient ingenuity to explain these words away: but their plain meaning is obvious enough. The Lord redeemed us from the curse of the law by taking that curse upon Himself. And this was symbolized by the fact that the very death He died was under a curse in the Law. Nor is this teaching unique even in the words of Paul.

"All things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation . . . we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 18-21, R.V.

The first part of this passage has been most strangely misunderstood. It has been claimed that here we see Paul rising above the cramping effects of his Jewish training into a true and noble understanding of the real meaning of the Cross—namely, that God was in Christ winning the world to Himself, breaking down *their* opposition and theirs only, there being none on His side. If that were so, how very strange the words of verse 21 would be. Are we to suppose that Paul changed his whole theological position within three or four sentences?

But let us examine these words more closely. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." This certainly says that *God took the initiative in our redemption*. But this is Paul's teaching again and again elsewhere. It is also that of the New Testament generally. So far, then, these words disagree only with that horrible travesty of Bible teaching which represents an only-angry Father being propitiated by the sacrifice of an only-loving Son. This shocking doctrine has not a scrap of support anywhere in the New Testament, which always represents the Atonement as the work of God, proceeding from His Love. See, for example, John iii. 16; Rom. iii. 25; v. 8. But, as we have seen, the Love of God is not at all incompatible with His eternal opposition to sin: and Paul has shown elsewhere that sin causes men to be at one and the same time the objects of the wrath of God and of His Love which seeks to save them from that wrath (see especially Rom. v. 8, 9; Eph. ii. 3-5).

Does he then temporarily abandon that position here? On the face of it, it is unlikely that a great thinker should

change his position in so vital a matter without seeming to be aware of any change. And the very next words, "not reckoning unto them their trespasses," explain what the "reconciliation" is. God reconciles men to Himself, makes their peace with Himself,\* by clearing them of the sin to which He must eternally be opposed. In fact Paul is saying in different words exactly the same thing he said in Rom. iii. 24, 25, R.V.:

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood."

The "reconciling," then, is the removal of a barrier which existed on God's side, as well as on man's. Of course, there is a barrier on man's side. Who questions it? Paul comes to that next. He goes on to plead, as an ambassador of Christ, "be ye reconciled to God." God has made provision at the Cross for the reconciliation. The claims of His Holiness have been met, but man must repent and cease from his antagonism to God. He must *seek forgiveness from Him*, or he will "receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. vi. 1) and there will be no reconciliation in fact.

Then comes the verse which repeats in other language, but with equal force, the statement in Galatians that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

"Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21, R.V.

God, in a mysterious way, caused Him, our sinless Redeemer, to become identified with human sin, *our* sin, in order that we, who are anything but sinless, might become identified with righteousness, not our own but God-given.

\* See the Note at the end of this chapter.



Put those two sayings together: "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" and "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin for us," and then add to them the words, "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.*" What a majesty of Divine Love and Holiness is here revealed! God Himself, in Christ, met the claims of His own Holy Law. Because He is Holy Light He could not compromise with sin. But He Himself, in Christ, dealt with the problem in the only possible way. He made Him, His Son Who is One with Himself, to become identified with our sin,\* and therefore subject to its curse, in order that, by bearing the penalty of sin, He might redeem us from the curse of the Law, and we might become the righteousness of God in Him. So He became a propitiation by His blood; so it became possible for God to be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.†

This is Paul's inmost thought about the Atonement, and, unless we are to suppose that his theology chopped and changed from moment to moment, this is at the back of his meaning whenever he says that Christ died for us, or that we have redemption through His blood. Search his writings through and you will not find one sentence which is inconsistent with this teaching, not one reference to the death of Christ which does not gain in clearness and force by being interpreted in harmony with Gal. iii. 13 and 2 Cor. v. 21, even where the context and sense do not definitely suggest and require such interpretation. Above all, we have seen how perfectly these two great pronouncements

\* Some have supposed that the words refer to a purely subjective self-identification with human sin on the part of our Saviour, by the power of sympathy and love, so that He felt the shame of our sin as though He had committed it Himself. This, beyond all question, is included in the meaning, but, if Paul had meant no more than this, must he not have written: "He made Himself to be sin for us"? Something deeper, more mysterious, more *objective*, is meant by Paul's solemn words.

† For a fuller discussion of how the death of Christ is a propitiation, see Chapter VIII, pp. 127-130.



fit in with Paul's explanation of the Divine forgiveness in Rom. iii. 23-26.

The above survey does not profess to be anything like a complete study of Paul's teaching about the death of Christ. For instance, nothing has been said of how Paul finds in Calvary God's provision for the union of Jew and Gentile in one Church (Eph. ii. 11-21), or his wonderful metaphor of the nailing to the Cross of the bond that was contrary to us, our debit account, expressed in the ordinances of His holy Law which we had broken (Col. ii. 14),\* or the Saviour's triumph over Satan in the hour of seeming defeat (Col. ii. 15). But enough has been said to show that Paul's teaching on this subject, though many-sided, is consistent, and that the explanation of God's forgiveness which he gives to us in Rom. iii. is made yet clearer and more luminous, but never in any way contradicted, by his teaching elsewhere.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE TO CHAPTER IV

##### THE MEANING OF "RECONCILE"

Before discussing the word "reconcile," it would be well to go to the root of the difficulty, which is the idea that if we say that something happens *on God's side* in reconciliation, we mean that He then ceases to bear ill-will to us and begins to love us. At the risk of repetition, we must insist that this is not our view. God so loved us while we were yet sinners that His Son died for us. But though God loves all men, whatever their attitude to Him, we believe that He has told us that no one whose sin is still upon him is acceptable to Him, or can have fellowship with Him—so much so that if we appear before His Judgment Throne with sin not taken away, because we have rejected His love, then Love can only weep, and it is Judgment that must deal with us. So, at any rate, our Lord teaches, as we have

\* See, however, Appendix C on "The Category of Law."

seen. The change that takes place in reconciliation is not that He then begins to love us, but that we then become acceptable to Him, because the sin to which He is eternally opposed is taken away in Christ. In Bible language, we cease to be "children of wrath" and become "children of God." For in the Word of God the seeming contradiction is steadily maintained that the sinner is at one and the same time the object of wrath and love, wrath because of his sin, and love because God is Love and longs to save him.

But it is claimed that the texts which speak of reconciliation always refer only to God winning over our love to Himself, and never to the removal of any barrier on His side. It may be admitted at once that in current modern English to "reconcile another to oneself" means to overcome his hostility and induce him to make friends: and "to reconcile oneself to another" means to overcome one's own hostility to him (though this latter phrase has quite a different meaning in the Bible English of 1 Sam. xxix. 4, where "reconcile himself to his master" means "win back his master's favour"). So also in our current speech "to be reconciled to another" often (but not invariably) means to be willing to forgive injuries received from the other, and to make friends. English usage therefore is supposed to favour the view that a removal of man's hostility to God is alone in Paul's mind here. If indeed the matter could be decided by English usage alone, it would be easy to show from 1 Sam. xxix. 4 and Matt. v. 24 that the usage of Bible English points in quite the opposite direction to the interpretation stated above. But as Paul wrote in Greek we must rather look to the meaning of the original.

It is claimed that the Greek word *katallasso* used here always has the meaning "win over the hostility of another," "change him over" from hostility to friendship, and that there is no idea of mutual reconciliation in it, as there is in *diallasso*, which is the word used in Matt. v. 24 and 1 Sam. xxix. 4 (LXX). But the real question is, What is the usage of *katallasso* in the New Testament?

Here is a non-theological example:

"But unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

Here the words "be reconciled to" (*katallassomai*) obviously include all that is necessary to end the estrangement. They certainly are not limited to a change in the wife's own attitude: she must win her husband back, and this may be the most difficult part.

I remember hearing a friend tell of the conversion of a man who had grievously wronged his wife. The moment he was converted, the first thing he said, after giving thanks to his Saviour, was, "Now I must go and be reconciled to my wife." He did not mean "abandon my enmity," for that enmity was gone before he had risen from his knees. What he meant, of course, was that he must entreat her forgiveness and make peace with her.

Next let us look at Rom. v. 8-11, where the R.V. is somewhat more clearly expressed than the A.V.

"God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life: and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."

Do the words "while we were enemies" suggest that the reconciliation was *only* an abandonment of enmity on our part? We notice first that "while we were enemies" answers to "while we were yet sinners" in verse 8, and

that "being reconciled" in verse 10 answers to "being now justified by his blood" in verse 9. Granted, of course, that the reconciliation *includes* our abandonment of enmity to God, it also includes all that is meant by "being justified by his blood," cleared of guilt in His sight, and no longer under His sentence as enemies to Him.\* Indeed, in this very verse 9, Paul speaks of our justification as a guarantee that we shall be saved from the wrath of God. The reconciliation then is mutual, there is a Divine side as well as the human side. And, secondly, the phrase "we have *received* the reconciliation" suggests that God's part in it is something much more than winning our love to Himself. If God gives us reconciliation, it must mean that something happens as regards His attitude to us—namely, that He causes us to become acceptable in His sight, which we were not before.

And, thirdly, we must again insist that Paul can hardly be supposed to offer two contradictory explanations of the death of Christ in two chapters of the same Epistle, so that the evidence of the clear teaching of Rom. iii. 23-26 is an additional support for the explanation of "reconcile" in chapter v, which we have seen to be justified on other grounds. See the Note on "The Idea of Reconciliation or Atonement" in Sanday and Headlam's *Commentary on Romans* (*International Critical Commentary*), pp. 129, 130.

Lastly, let us look at Col. i. 21, 22, where again the R.V. is somewhat clearer than the A.V.:

"And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before him."

As in Rom. v, the words "being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" might suggest

\* Luke xix. 27.

that the reconciliation was solely the removal of that enmity on the side of the Colossians. But the words that follow point to something deeper. What was the purpose of this reconciliation? Paul does not say "to make you loving and well-disposed to Him"—though, of course, this was included—but "to present you holy and without blemish and unreprieveable before him." That is the meaning of the reconciliation, to make the Colossians acceptable to God, holy and without blemish and unreprieveable before Him, which they certainly were not before the reconciliation, deeply though God loved them even then; and on their own merits they could never have become so. Of course the reconciliation is not one-sided. True faith presupposes repentance, and there must be continuance in faith (Col. i. 23). But the main emphasis in reconciliation is ever on God's side in making us acceptable to Him, "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us" (Col. ii. 14, R.V.).

So when we turn to 2 Cor. v. 18-20, the word "reconcile" must carry the same sense which it has elsewhere in Paul's writings, even if it be somewhat different from the classical or non-Biblical use of the Greek word. God "reconciles us to Himself," not only by softening our hard hearts by the love of our Saviour on the Cross, but also and above all by making our peace with Himself: and when Paul tells the Corinthians to "be reconciled to God," he means not only that they must abandon enmity to Him, but also that they must seek His forgiveness through the blood of Christ.



## CHAPTER V

### THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

In the last chapter we saw that Paul has a definite solution of the problem of forgiveness. He finds that solution in the Cross of Jesus Christ, who became a propitiation for our sins by becoming sin for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law by Himself being made a curse. But this view of the Cross is by no means confined to Paul among New Testament writers.

#### ACTS

It is true that in the earliest sermons of the Apostles, recorded in Acts, the death of Christ is spoken of as a crime committed by the Jews rather than as the means of man's salvation. But, as Dale\* has pointed out, this was inevitable, for in speaking to the actual murderers of the Lord Jesus, within a few weeks of His death, that aspect of it was the one which needed emphasis, and it would not have been fitting to explain to them *then* that their crime was God's provision for the salvation of the world. Peter, however, gives hints, which only needed a searching of the Scriptures to develop into the full truth.

"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts ii. 23.

"Those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." Acts iii. 18.

Peter was speaking to Jews about their own prophets, and those who believed his words, and searched the familiar

\* *The Atonement*, Lecture IV., to which the section on Acts in this chapter is deeply indebted.



prophets for prophecies of a suffering Messiah, must have found in Isa. liii that

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

It must never be forgotten that the frequent references to our Lord's death having been "according to the Scriptures" must carry with them an allusion to Isa. liii, and all that that chapter means to a Christian Jew.\*

Moreover, Peter takes care to connect the remission of sin with the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Acts ii. 38.

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts x. 43.

There is assuredly no contradiction between this teaching and that of Paul. Rather, may we not say with Dale that Peter was preparing the way for the fuller revelation that He, in Whose Name men must trust for the remission of sins, had by His death atoned for sins?

The earliest recorded sermon of Paul follows somewhat the same line as those of Peter, as regards both the death of Christ and the doctrine of salvation, though the latter is more explicitly stated.

"They that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the

\* When Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch, beginning from this very chapter (Acts viii. 32-35), we may be quite sure that he did not leave out of his teaching the essential message of the chapter with which he began.

prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. . . . Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins : and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 27, 38, 39.

Already Paul is teaching the doctrine of justification by faith in the name of Jesus, but he, too, in speaking to unconverted Jews, does not explain *how* the Lord justifies the believer. Very clearly does Paul testify to the fuller truth when speaking to the Ephesian elders :

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28.

It is indeed a valuable evidence of Luke's trustworthiness as a reporter of the sermons of Peter and Paul, that he makes no attempt to insert in the sermons delivered to unconverted Jews or pagans the fuller doctrine contained in this address to Christians. And Acts xx. 28 not only explains what lay behind the teaching of Paul in xiii. 38, 39, but also surely what lay behind the very similar words of Peter in x. 43.

Let us now consider the evidence of the Epistles, other than those of Paul, and of Revelation.

#### JAMES AND JUDE

James and Jude indeed do not mention the redeeming death of Christ at all. The former does not mention the forgiveness of sins till the last few sentences of his Epistle, which is mainly concerned with practical questions of Christian conduct. The latter Epistle is a brief letter called forth by the rise of certain errors in the Church, and the

writer simply has no occasion to refer to forgiveness or redemption.

### JOHN

We have already seen something of the teaching of John,\* and so far there has certainly been no disagreement between it and the teaching of Paul about the death of Christ. For the sake of clearness all the important passages from the First Epistle are here given, even if already quoted in the preceding chapters.

"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 5-7.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John ii. 1, 2.

"God is love. . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 8, 10.

John tells us that God is Love, and in close connection with this statement he says that He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He has already said that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, and towards the end of the Epistle he writes mysterious words which, whatever they mean in detail, clearly indicate that the main pur-

\* The writer of the Fourth Gospel and of the Epistles attributed to John is here referred to as "John" to avoid continual clumsy circumlocution. But though we believe that he was actually John son of Zebedee, we do not intend to assume that belief, or to build any argument upon it.

pose of our Lord's coming into the world was to shed His blood.

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. . . . For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." 1 John v. 6, 8, R.V.

This writer, who lays such emphasis on love that he has been called the "apostle of Love," certainly finds nothing to shock *his* moral sense in the blood of Jesus Christ as the means of our salvation.

We have so far almost entirely refrained from quoting the Fourth Gospel, not because we ourselves regard its authority or historicity as in any degree inferior to those of the other three Gospels, but because many people would not admit its testimony as valid evidence of what our Lord actually taught. But certainly the Fourth Gospel is *at least* unimpeachable evidence of the beliefs and teaching of its own author, and it is as such that we quote two great sayings from it here.

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29.

Why a Lamb? The words plainly point to a sacrificial death: to a Jew they could have no other meaning. As a Lamb slain in sacrifice, the Lord was going to take away the sin of the world. And that word "take away" means in the original to "lift up and take away," "to bear away."

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16.

In what sense does the death of the Lord Jesus Christ save the believer from perishing? This verse, taken by itself,

does not answer that question, but we have read in the same Gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and the two sayings interpret one another. He saves us from perishing because, as the Lamb slain for us, He bears away our sin. And what is meant by the words, "God gave his only begotten Son"? Again we see how the Evangelist understood these words by reference to what he wrote elsewhere, in the First Epistle: "He . . . sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." What then is the difference between the teaching of John and that of Paul about the death of Christ? The form of expression is certainly different, but the thought behind the form is just the same.

Next we turn to the Book of Revelation, and here again in quoting this book we do not assume or build any argument on our own belief that the author was the Apostle John. If he was not, then at least he was a first-century Christian, whose book was thought worthy of inclusion in the New Testament, and the extracts from it have their part in the general witness of the New Testament. He speaks with no uncertain voice. He glorifies the Lord Jesus for having "washed (R.V. loosed) us from our sins in his own blood" (i. 5). He sees Him as a Lamb, "as though it had been slain" (v. 6, R.V.), and refers to Him as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (xiii. 8). He tells us that the Elders and the Living Creatures sing His praises, saying: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (v. 9). The white-robed martyrs of the Great Tribulation are described as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vii. 14). This is just the teaching of John i. 29 and 1 John i. 7, and of such passages as Rom. iii. 24; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Eph. i. 7.



## HEBREWS

The sacrificial teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews is well known. Nothing can be more uncompromising than the assertion of the writer that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins: for though the immediate context of those words refers to the Mosaic Law, the writer's whole point is that in Christ the principles of that Law are perfectly fulfilled. He declares that the purpose of the Incarnation was that Christ "might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (ii. 17, R.V.). Christ "through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (ix. 12, R.V.). "Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (ix. 26, R.V.). "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (ix. 28). The old sacrifices, often repeated, could never "make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (x. 1, 2). "If the blood of bulls and of goats . . . sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (ix. 13, 14). Under the old Law the way into the Holy of Holies was not made clear, as the Veil of the Temple bore witness (ix. 1-8): but now we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (x. 19).

There is not the same legal language in this Epistle as in Paul's writings. Substitution is not as directly asserted. But it is clearly stated: (1) That in the Law there is no remission of sins without shedding of blood, and that this principle was perfectly carried out by the sacrifice of Christ, Who appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (ix. 22, 26). (2) That the conscience of the sinner can be



cleansed from guilt by the blood of Christ and by that alone (ix. 14; x. 1, 2). (3) That only through the blood of Christ was it possible for the sinner to draw near to God, to have "boldness to enter into the holiest." (4) That Christ was Himself sinless, but offered Himself for the sins of others.

Therefore, though in the main the form of expression differs from that of Paul, the essential meaning of the teaching is just the same. The writings of Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews are by no means in contradiction: the one supplements the other.\*

#### PETER

There remains one more New Testament writer, Peter, or, if you like, the author of the First Epistle attributed to him.† This Epistle opens with a salutation, in which the writer describes his readers as

"elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."  
1 Pet. i. 2.

Here is an allusion to the cleansing work of the blood of Christ (*cp.* 1 John i. 7; Heb. ix. 19-22). It comes straight from the ritual of Old Testament sacrifice, and surely im-

\* Even Dean Rashdall (*Idea of Atonement*, pp. 150, 151) acknowledges that the Epistle seems, on the face of it, to have the meaning which we here attribute to it, though he maintains that such a view is erroneous or at least very one-sided, and himself puts forward a very different interpretation of the Epistle. See Appendix D.

† The Second Epistle of Peter is supposed by many to be a late second-century forgery, and though we do not accept this opinion, we refrain from quoting that Epistle in this survey of Apostolic teaching. Its testimony is indeed limited to two somewhat indirect allusions to our Lord's redeeming death (i. 9; ii. 1), for, like Jude, the writer is mainly concerned with certain errors which had arisen, and were to arise, in the Church.

plies that the death of Christ is a sacrifice for the purpose of taking away sin, just as the blood sprinkled on the people on the day of the Covenant came from oxen slain as a peace-offering (Exod. xxiv. 5-8).

In the same chapter Peter adds his testimony to that of the Fourth Gospel and the Revelation in comparing the Lord to a Lamb slain for our redemption, and like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he sees in the infinite cost of our redemption a warning against trifling with God by continuing in, or returning to, a life of sin.

"If ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." 1 Pet. i. 17-19, R.V.

Again in the third chapter we find a deeply significant sentence:

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Once more there is the definite statement that the death of Christ was "for sins": no mere martyrdom, but a sacrifice to take away sins. But those words, "the just for the unjust," go deeper. In itself the word "for" (Greek *huper*) need mean no more than "on behalf of." But the statement "the just suffered on behalf of the unjust" surely indicates that it was *as our Substitute* that He suffered on our behalf, especially when these words are taken together with Peter's teaching in the first chapter that we were redeemed with precious blood as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. We deserved death; He did not: He died on

our behalf "that He might bring us to God," Whom we could not approach apart from His redeeming sacrifice. Is not this Substitution? It will be seen that we do not say that Substitution is directly asserted in this verse, but that it is so clearly implied that the words would be meaningless apart from it.

We may claim, therefore, that the clear witness of the great passage which we next quote is far from standing by itself in Peter's Epistle, and cannot lightly be dismissed as an isolated "proof-text."

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." 1 Pet. ii. 21-25.

Peter's words here have been explained away in two ways. First, it has been remarked that the Greek words rendered "bare our sins . . . on the tree" mean "carried our sins up to the tree": and from this it has been inferred that He had been bearing our sins all through His ministry and not in His death alone. This would indicate that the sense in which He "bare our sins" in no way involved a transference of guilt to Him, or implied that His death was an effective sacrifice whereby alone our sins were taken away.

This leads secondly to the positive conclusion that our Lord bare our sins only as a parent might bear the sins of a dearly loved child, in the sense that those sins lay on His heart as a load of anguish.

If anyone desires to interpret the Atonement in this way, he is, of course, free to do so as a matter of his own personal opinion: but it is not difficult to show that there is no valid ground for saying that *that is what Peter meant*. It may be remarked first that the interpretation "carried our sins up to the tree" is *not* the natural meaning of the Greek words, though no doubt it would have been, if Peter had been a writer of classical Greek. He is quoting the Septuagint version of Isa. liii, from which he takes three phrases: "bare (our) sins" (verse 12), "by whose stripes ye were healed" (verse 5), "going astray like sheep" (verse 6). In Isa. liii. 11, 12, the word "bear" represents the same Greek word (*anaphero*) as is used in 1 Pet. ii. 24, and in Isaiah there is certainly no sense of "carrying up." It is evident that Peter quoted the actual words of Isaiah, "he bare (our) sins," and then added "on the tree" to show where and how it was that the prophecy was fulfilled.\* We shall have occasion at a later stage to discuss the strange theory that our Lord's atoning work was proceeding all through His ministry and only culminated on the Cross: at present it is sufficient to show that Peter's language here gives not the slightest support for such a view.

Surely the plain meaning of Peter's words, which no one would question if it were not for objections of a theological nature, is that the Lord "bare our sins" as a load of guilt, bare them "in His body," even as the sin of Israel was laid upon the head of the goat on the Day of Atonement. The words "in His body" are alone sufficient to rule out any idea that He bore our sins *only* in the sense that they caused Him grief, as a son's sin might cause grief to his

\* If it be objected that the preposition *epi* ("on") is used with the accusative, and should mean "to," it is replied that there are several examples in the Greek New Testament where *epi* with the accusative means "on"—e.g., "asleep on the cushion" (Mark iv. 38, R.V.); "the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke ii. 25, R.V.). The classical distinction between accusative and dative with prepositions of place was passing away in the Greek of the New Testament.

mother. Something far deeper, more objective, more awful must be meant. And this is confirmed by the fact that Peter was evidently steeped in the language and thought of Isa. liii, where the sense in which the Servant of Jehovah "bare the sins of many" is as clear as words can make it.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isa. liii. 5, 6.\*

Further, the words "that we, being dead unto sins, might live unto righteousness" are also evidence that Peter believed that our Lord died as our Substitute. For what meaning is there in saying that Christ bore our sins in order that we might die to sins, unless it was as our Substitute that He died? This supposition is necessary to make sense of the words: and the same applies to Paul's language in Rom. vi and 2 Cor. v. When He died it was the same as if we had died, because He was our Substitute (2 Cor. v. 14). When we by faith claim Him as our Saviour, we "become united with Him by the likeness of His death," and so we "die to sin" (1 Pet. ii. 24; Rom. vi. 1-11). If He were not our Substitute, how could His death produce such an effect?†

Some readers, however, may feel disposed to reply to this argument somewhat on the following lines. "What if Peter does mean to teach all that you say! We do not admit that he is a final authority, and you profess not to be arguing on the assumption of verbal inspiration. Why then all this minute examination of the exact meaning of

\* See Note at end of chapter on Matthew's quotation of Isa. liii. 4 (Matt. viii. 17).

† As we remarked on 1 Pet. iii. 18, we are not stating that the words directly assert substitution, but that they would be meaningless apart from it.



verbs and prepositions in a verse of 1 Peter, and all this argument to prove that Peter believed in a Substitutionary Atonement? The time has gone by for proving doctrines by disquisitions on Greek grammar."

In reply we would point out that the issue is constantly being clouded by an attempt (doubtless unconscious) of the "liberal Christian" to "have it both ways." While repudiating the final authority of any New Testament writer, he nevertheless likes to quote texts in favour of his own theories, explaining them accordingly. Then when the "conservative" proceeds to show that the "liberal" interpretation of these texts is not valid, the "liberal" is apt to grow impatient and say that his case does not rest on texts at all. This is really not quite fair!

But, further, we claim that, quite apart from the question whether the words of Peter or other New Testament writers have the final authority of Divine inspiration, it is of very real importance to be clear as to what their teaching actually was. For while the "liberal" may brush aside the evidence of individual texts as inconclusive, he surely must face up to the significance of the fact, which we claim to have proved, that the evidence of the New Testament writers without exception (in so far as they refer to the death of Christ at all) is in complete harmony, and either expressly asserts the sacrificial and substitutionary meaning of Calvary, or else becomes clearer and more forceful by assuming that meaning. Everywhere the death of Christ is represented as a Sacrifice fulfilling the types of the Old Testament sacrifices, and it is taught that this Sacrifice was God's appointed means whereby the sin of the world should be taken away.

Paul speaks of the Lord as a "propitiation . . . by His blood," John repeats that He is "the propitiation for our sins," and that God sent Him for that very purpose (Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10).

Paul says that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us: the Fourth Gospel describes Him at the beginning



of His ministry as the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world: the Revelation speaks of Him as the Lamb Who was slain, and redeemed us to God by His own blood: Peter says that we were redeemed with precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Cor. v. 7; John i. 29; Rev. v. 6, 9; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19).

Paul says that in Him we have our redemption through His blood: John says that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin: Peter tells his readers that they are elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (Eph. i. 7; John i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 1, 2).

Paul says that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, and that Him Who knew no sin God made to be sin for us: Peter says that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and that with His stripes we are healed, and that He suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (Gal. iii. 13; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 24; iii. 18).

Is not this harmony deeply significant? The so-called "Pauline" doctrine of the Atonement, often depreciatingly spoken of as "Paulinism," is seen to be equally the doctrine of Peter, of the writer to the Hebrews, of John, and (if he be distinct from John) of the author of the Revelation. Some, indeed, would explain this fact by saying that all the New Testament writers alike were steeped in the sacrificial teaching of the Old Testament, and that it is just this Jewish element against which the modern mind revolts.

It is entirely unnecessary to seek to escape this objection by minimizing the influence of the Old Testament on the New Testament writers. On the contrary, the present writer believes that the Bible is a Divine unity, and that the Old Testament sacrifices were ordained by the Lord partly for the express purpose of foreshadowing the supreme sacrifice. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that, *after our Lord had taught His disciples that His death was for sins and had been foretold as such in the Old Testament*, the Holy Spirit directed their thoughts to the sacrificial

portions of their Bible, and that this does in large measure explain the harmony in the form of their teaching about their Master's death.

The New Testament writers themselves make no secret of their belief that the Old Testament had prophesied the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sins, and this fact does indeed furnish an important confirmation of the foregoing argument as to the meaning intended by the writers of such phrases as "Christ died for our sins," "He bare our sins," "Christ redeemed us . . . having become a curse for us." Paul says that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3): Peter says that "the Spirit of Christ (in the prophets) testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11). Luke represents Peter as saying in the earliest days of the Christian Church:

"Those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." Acts iii. 18.

But of all the prophecies of the death of Christ in the Old Testament none is clearer or more definite than the "fifth Gospel" of Isa. liii. No one could possibly say that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures without taking into account that great prophecy. We submit, therefore, that the clear and unmistakable substitutionary teaching of that chapter should be regarded as regulating the interpretation not only of 1 Pet. ii. 24, 25, but also of every place where it is said that Christ "died for our sins" or which alludes to "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

But, as has already been said, this very argument is used by some people as a base from which to attack the doctrine of the Atonement. "This is exactly what we complain of. This whole doctrine of a Substitutionary Atonement is Jewish, not Christian; it is a survival in early Christian

teaching of elements taken from a lower stratum of thought. Jesus never talked like this about His own death, apart from one or two sayings at most, which were probably attributed to Him in error or misunderstanding by His reporters." We reply first that the fact that all the New Testament writers who discuss our Lord's death are in agreement is a matter of deep significance, whatever the explanation of that agreement may be. It comes to this, that the liberal Christian, who wishes to construct a theory of the Atonement on lines different from those laid down by Paul, must base his theory on human reasonings independent of the New Testament, and must reject, or else explain away, the united testimony of what, even on his own premisses, are the primitive sources of our Christian Faith. By what right can twentieth-century thinkers dismiss that united testimony as "not Christian"? Whence can anyone derive a valid definition of what is Christian, if it be not from the New Testament?

Secondly, the objectors' argument rests on the assumption that the doctrine which we have been studying in the last two chapters had its origin *after* the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and has no foundation in His own life and teaching. Now it has been shown already, in Chapters I-IV, that the teaching of Paul and the Epistles generally about the death of Christ is in the deepest harmony with His own representation of God. If, therefore, He had never said one word bearing directly on the meaning of His death, there would still be a true unity and harmony between His teaching and that of the Epistles. But we do not for a moment admit the truth of the objectors' assumption. We believe that it can be proved to be entirely contrary to the facts, and in the next chapter we propose to examine the evidence on which our belief is based.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES TO CHAPTER V

## NOTE A.—MATT. viii. 17

In Matt. viii. 17 the words of Isa. liii. 4 are quoted as referring to our Lord's healing work, not to His death. Let us first see what Isaiah's words mean in their own context. The verse is as follows:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

The second part of the verse indicates that the "griefs" (literally "sicknesses") and "sorrows" (literally "pains") were so borne by the Servant of Jehovah as to cause Israel to conclude that He was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," and Israel thought that this implied God's displeasure with Him on His own account, an error which the next verse proceeds to remove. Moreover, the context of the chapter as a whole shows that the words "sicknesses" and "pains" are used by the prophet metaphorically for "sins" (as frequently in Scripture—e.g., Isa. i. 5, 6), or perhaps for the penalty due to us for our sins.

When we look at Matt. viii. 16, 17, we find quite a different turn given to the verse.

"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses."

We see that what is a metaphor in Isaiah is taken literally in Matthew, and at first sight it might seem as though the word "bare" has in Matthew no other sense than "re-

moved," for there is no suggestion in Matthew or any other Evangelist that our Lord physically endured any of the diseases which He removed from others. But the quotation seems to be an example of double reference in Scripture. The prophecy in its original meaning refers to One Who took sins or penalties upon Himself, and was supposed to be suffering for His own fault. But, as in the literal sense, that which He bore is described as "diseases" and "pains," the Evangelist sees in it a second meaning intended by the Holy Spirit, predicting the Lord's healing work. And as for the sense which the word "bare" has in Matthew, we may say that "these cures were in fact and in strictness a fulfilment of this Scripture, because wrought in His character as Saviour. . . . Christ was sent for the general purpose of *removing by the sacrifice of Himself* the evil which sin had brought into the world. And this work He commenced when He cured bodily diseases,"\* for disease and death came into the world through sin.

#### NOTE B.—SUBSTITUTE OR REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. R. W. Dale (*The Atonement*, Appendix, Note H) argues with reference to 2 Cor. v. 14 that "for" (*hyper*) implies representation not substitution, and that at this point it is not clear that representation is equivalent to substitution. We hasten to deny any attempt to claim that the preposition itself proves substitution. It does not. But when Dale adds, "If the idea of substitution as distinguished from representation had been in his mind, he would not have written '(if) one died for all, then all *died*,' but '(if) one died for all, then all were *delivered from the necessity of dying*,'" we would reply that he seems to be making a distinction without a difference. Granted that Paul meant "He, the Representative of all, died, therefore all have died," yet how awfully meaningless would his

\* David Baron, *The Servant of Jehovah*, p. 85.

words have been if it were *not* true that that death of ours in Christ our Representative delivers us from dying in our own persons eternally! Does not "they which live" in verse 15 mean "they who have eternal life" (being delivered from death by Him Who died for them)? Substitution is not directly stated in 2 Cor. v. 14, nor have we ever said that it is: but it is taken for granted, and, apart from it, the words of that verse would be a dreadful mockery of the believer.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE DEATH OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS

WE have already shown that the Epistles supply a consistent explanation of a vital problem in our Lord's teaching—namely, the contrast between God's joyful forgiveness of the repentant sinner, and the unrelieved awfulness of His judgment on those who reject His love. We must now go further, and examine the direct evidence of our Lord's life and teaching as to the meaning which He Himself attached to His death.

What were the reasons for our Lord's last visit to Jerusalem? It is important to examine this question, because it is commonly suggested that the love which He manifested on the Cross was that of the martyr, who is willing to die rather than give up the attempt to win men by his message. "The death of Christ was certainly a great act of self-sacrifice, in our sense of the word, but it was brought about by a mean conspiracy of wicked men. . . . His death could not have been evaded without treachery to the ideals for which He lived. But this was due to the circumstances of the time, the hostility of priests and people; not to any mysterious compact with the Father, nor to any necessity for making an offering to Him to . . . atone for the sins of the whole human race." These words taken from a pamphlet on the Atonement issued by the Modern Churchman's Union are a clear statement of the view they represent. Let us follow them up by two more detailed explanations, from a similar point of view, of the events which led up to our Lord's death. Bishop Headlam, in his recent book *The Atonement* (pp. 50-52), says that our Lord went up to Jerusalem to establish the Divine rule there, and it was in that attempt that He lost His life. This visit was carefully prepared for, and for a time seemed about to

succeed. He dominated the Temple, the great fortress of Jerusalem, and by sheer spiritual power He seemed about to establish the Divine rule without force of arms. But "the ruling oligarchy was too clever for Him; so this ideal kingdom, like so many other ideals in human history, was overcome by the powers of the world, and Jesus paid the penalty."

Dr. W. R. Maltby, in *The Meaning of the Cross* (pp. 6-9), says that our Lord's work was gradually more and more hampered by the opposition of His enemies, because He would not use either physical or supernatural force; so that at last He had to choose between either abandoning His message, or living the life of a hunted fugitive, or going up to Jerusalem to proclaim His message openly and die. For a time He accepted the fugitive life, in order that He might train His disciples: but when they had had their period of training, He would not "remain in hiding or wait till He perished in some secret assault or was flung into prison and His message suppressed." He saw that the only way left to Him to witness to the truth was to die for it, and He made one last mighty assault on Jerusalem, astonishing His adversaries with the fear that He might yet carry all before Him: but the end was what He had foreseen it must be.

Now let us measure all this against the Gospels. Dr. Maltby has at any rate recognized, what Bishop Headlam ignores, that our Lord went up to Jerusalem well knowing that He was going to His death. As we shall presently be considering His sayings on this subject in detail, it is unnecessary to quote more than one of them here.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him . . . and shall kill him." Mark x. 33, 34.

He went to Jerusalem, not of course to "get Himself put to death," but to give His people a last chance of accepting

Him, their "time of visitation" (Luke xix. 44). Dr. Maltby has quite rightly pointed out that His foreknowledge of the issue of the struggle did not make His effort to win Jerusalem any less tremendous. It is clearly implied in the Gospels that the leaders of the Jews were filled with terror lest He might even then prevail, and that, humanly speaking, they had some reason for their fear (Mark xi. 18; xii. 34, 47; John xii. 19). But He *did* know what the end would be, and it is most distressing that it should be necessary to answer a suggestion that His enemies were "too clever for Him." Till God's hour struck they never faced Him without ignominious defeat. He had taught in the Temple *daily* (Mark xiv. 49)—surely this does not refer to the two or three days of work in the Temple mentioned by Mark, but to the long ministry in Jerusalem, of which John gives us some record—yet His enemies had not seized Him, assuredly not from want of will. What made the difference that night in Gethsemane? The physical odds against Him were no greater than they had often been before. And, as He sat in the upper room, He knew well that He had been betrayed (Mark xiv. 18-21). Had He chosen He might easily have avoided the Garden where He knew the traitor would expect to find Him. He was forewarned, but He did not choose to be forearmed.

While Dr. Maltby's account is less obviously at variance with the Gospels than Bishop Headlam's, he too seems to think that the Lord Jesus could have been dealt with by His enemies according to their will without His own consent. He says that the Lord had to come to Jerusalem, because otherwise He would have had to remain in hiding, or to wait till He perished in some secret assault or was thrown into prison and His message suppressed. The physical force and evil will of the Lord's enemies was then the dominant factor, and the Lord died, as other martyrs have died, because He would not be silenced.

It is true that Dr. Maltby acknowledges that our Lord could have saved Himself by using supernatural force, but

he says that He ruled out that alternative absolutely, because He was opposed to the use of force in all circumstances. He Himself, however, gives a different reason for His submission (Matt. xxvi. 54, 56). Moreover, He had other ways of extricating Himself from danger of death before the time, besides the use of even supernatural violence. When a raging mob seized Him in the synagogue at Nazareth, He did them no injury, but He passed through the midst of them and went His way (Luke iv. 28-30). Again, when warned of danger from Herod, He did not escape from Herod's jurisdiction, but sent a message to Herod that His work would continue until the appointed time, and that Jerusalem was the appointed place of His death (Luke xiii. 31-35). This does not look like One Who felt that His enemies had left Him no choice but to abandon His work or die.

What foundation has Dr. Maltby for the statement, so fundamental to his case, that our Lord's work was constantly hampered by opposition, and that He was hunted from place to place? There is very little support for it in the Synoptists alone. In Mark iii. 7 Jesus withdraws from some town, probably Capernaum, on account of a plot to kill Him, but His work is not in the least hindered, for an enormous multitude follows him. In Mark vii. 24 we read that the Lord retired into Phœnicia after the dispute with the Pharisees on the authority of tradition. It is not, however, stated by the Evangelist that He did so to avoid arrest, and we find Him coming back into Galilee when He chooses, and teaching great multitudes again (Mark viii). When He withdraws with His disciples to Cæsarea Philippi, and again for a secret journey through Galilee (Mark ix. 30), there is no suggestion that He was escaping His enemies, but rather that He wanted privacy to teach His disciples and prepare them for His coming death.

It is in John's Gospel that we hear most about Jesus withdrawing from persecution, and even going into hiding on that account on one occasion. John shows that much of

our Lord's work in Galilee was necessitated by the attitude of the Judæan Jews (iv. 1-3; vii. 1-9). He represents Him also as withdrawing beyond Jordan after the feast of the dedication, because the Jews had tried to take Him (x. 40): but many came to Him, and many believed on Him there (x. 41, 42). When He goes to Bethany to raise Lazarus the disciples are alarmed, but Jesus quietly persists, knowing that the appointed hour has not yet come (xi. 8-10). After the raising of Lazarus He really did go into hiding (xi. 54) until the final journey to Jerusalem.

But if John's evidence is to be used, we must remark that nothing could be more contrary to Dr. Maltby's position than the Fourth Gospel as a whole. The Lord may indeed withdraw temporarily because His hour had not yet come. But from John vii. 32 to x. 39 we have a record of work at Jerusalem, interrupted perhaps by absences not recorded by John, but carried on amidst the most furious opposition, and marked by at least three attempts to arrest or kill Him which completely failed, although He certainly used no force in His defence (vii. 32-47; viii. 59; x. 39): and the Lord maintained that the laying down of His life was entirely His own affair, not in the power of His enemies at all (x. 17, 18).

It appears, then, that both the estimates of the causes of our Lord's death which we have just been considering are at variance with the Gospels, from which alone we have any knowledge of His life. Needless to say, we do not deny that the opposition of the Jews was a cause of His death. Of course it was. But the Gospels show that this cause is not sufficient by itself to account for all the facts, and that something much deeper than martyrdom lay behind the Cross. Some of the reasons for this statement have been indicated in the foregoing discussion; others will appear as we study our Lord's teaching about His death, which we will now begin to do, limiting ourselves, as in Chapters I and II, to the first three Gospels.

It is well known that there are a few sayings of our Lord



Himself which in the plainest language assert the sacrificial meaning of His death, and one at least which in its natural grammatical meaning asserts that He died as the Substitute of those whom He redeemed.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark x. 45.

Here "for" answers to the Greek *anti*, which means "instead of" rather than "on behalf of." But it is supposed that these sayings are so few that they can be dismissed as "proof-texts," isolated from the general current of our Lord's teaching and open to suspicion as reflections of later thought or misunderstandings on the part of His reporters. Are they really isolated statements? Let us see.

In the first three Gospels the first recorded instance of our Lord's foretelling His death was at Cæsarea Philippi, immediately after Peter's great confession of faith and a week before the Transfiguration (Mark viii. 31-34; ix. 2). From that time on we find that the subject was continually in His thoughts and on His lips. Two facts stand out clearly as we study His sayings. First, He regarded His death as something which *must* come, and that not because of the power of His enemies, but because the Scriptures had foretold it.

"And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." Mark viii. 31.

"How is it written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nought?" Mark ix. 12, R.V.

"He taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed he shall rise the third day." Mark ix. 31.



"The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!" Mark xiv. 21.

"I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." Luke xxii. 37.

"And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Mark xiv. 27.

"Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Matt. xxvi. 53, 54, R.V.

If it be objected that this last saying rests on the unsupported testimony of Matthew, all that it contains is implicit in the following words recorded by both Matthew and Mark.

"I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but this is done that the scriptures might be fulfilled." Mark xiv, 49, R.V. See Matt. xxvi. 55, 56.

The force at the disposal of His enemies was seemingly overwhelming, but there was a very different kind of necessity for the Lord's submission.

"This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Luke xxii. 53.

God had decreed it, and had recorded His will in the Scriptures centuries before. And behind the physical force of His human enemies lay the spiritual powers of darkness, to whom was permitted a season of power to afflict the Son

of God. He Who believed and taught this must surely have believed that some tremendous Divine purpose was being served by His death.

Moreover, we have seen that it is objected to the teaching of the Epistles about the death of Christ that it is Jewish rather than Christian, because it is founded on Old Testament sacrifices and prophecy. But the Lord Jesus Himself, even before His death, made plain that He regarded it as the fulfilment of prophecy. And in Luke xxiv it is told of Him that, after His resurrection, He carefully explained first to the two at Emmaus, and then to all the Apostles, the teaching of the Old Testament about Himself, and especially about His death (Luke xxiv. 25-27; 44-47). But as some people suspect the authenticity of sayings attributed to our Lord after His resurrection, we will put the main stress on those which He uttered before His death. If the Lord's death was really an important subject of Old Testament prophecy, as He repeatedly asserted, then the Old Testament figures of vicarious sacrifice and the prophecies of One Who should suffer in our stead, must be the true key to the meaning of the Atonement. What Old Testament prophecies of the death of Christ are there which do not point directly or indirectly to the death of an innocent Victim in the sinner's stead?

The two prophecies which our Lord actually quotes as referring to His death are deeply significant.

"And he was reckoned among the transgressors."  
Luke xxii. 37; Isa. liii. 12.

Apart from the context in Isaiah, we might perhaps think that the meaning of these words was only that our Lord was to be treated as a criminal *by His enemies*, who would crucify Him between thieves. This is no doubt included in the meaning, and the inferior MSS. followed in the Received Text quote the verse in this sense in Mark's narrative of the Crucifixion (Mark xv. 28, A.V.). But He Who

quoted the verse, as recorded by Luke, must have been familiar with the whole chapter from which that verse was taken.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Isa. liii. 5, 6, 12.

But perhaps the other quotation is even more striking.

"Jesus saith unto them . . . It is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Mark xiv. 27; see Zech. xiii. 7.

Jehovah is speaking here, and our Lord's quotation of this verse as referring to Himself shows that He believed that He, the sinless, perfect Son of God, was about to be smitten by His own Father. This goes far beyond the assertion that God would permit His enemies to slay Him, true though that would have been. But for what possible reason should Jehovah smite His Shepherd? Isaiah's words, "Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," supply the only answer, when the Shepherd is understood as the Son of God. Let us just place these two quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures side by side with the so-called proof-texts, and see how perfectly they fit together.

"This that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors." Luke xxii. 37.

"It is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Mark xiv. 27.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark x. 45.

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many." Mark xiv. 24, R.V.

Do not these four sayings interpret one another? Does anything in the words of Paul, Peter, or John, go beyond the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ here set forth? If it be said that the quotations are themselves only two more proof-texts, we reply that they are corroborated by our Lord's consistent practice in teaching that His death was the subject of prophecy.

A second fact which stands out as we study our Lord's sayings about His death is that He looked forward to it with a horror and dread which require some explanation beyond the natural human shrinking from pain and death. On an occasion of uncertain date, but certainly a considerable time before His final journey to Jerusalem, He said to His disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50). The suspense of waiting for what He knows is coming "straitens" or crushes Him.

During the last journey to Jerusalem there seems to have been something in the Master's bearing, as He meditated on what lay before Him, which filled the disciples with a strange terror.

"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge

him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again." Mark x. 32-34.

We do well to remember that it was immediately after this incident that the sons of Zebedee made their request, and the Lord asked them whether they were able to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with (Mark x. 35-38). And it was when He saw the indignation of the ten at that request that He taught them what is true greatness in a Christian, and clinched the argument with the words:

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark x. 45.

Did He really say those words? If any question it, we may point out how well the saying agrees with its context. For if *that* was in His mind as He walked along the road to Jerusalem—that He should become a ransom *in the place of* many, taking the sinners' place with all that that involved—it is not so difficult to see why the horror that weighed upon His own soul should have been so great that it communicated itself in some degree to His disciples, incapable as they were of understanding the cause.

But it was in the Garden of Gethsemane, immediately before His arrest, that the full horror of His coming sufferings came upon Him.

"He taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto



Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand." Mark xiv. 33-42.

The Son of God, Whose delight was ever to do His Father's will, is seen here in an awful agony of shrinking from what that will entailed. The shrinking was indeed accompanied by perfect submission, and, as the writer to the Hebrews says, the Lord learned obedience in its uttermost meaning by obeying at so terrible a cost (Heb. v. 7-9). But how shall that shrinking be explained? It is not enough to say that He was very Man, and that He "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He Himself has faced up to agony and death, and has overcome. This is perfectly true, and is a very important truth too, but, on the assumption that He was shrinking from physical sufferings only, it is not a sufficient explanation. A stream cannot rise above its source. How comes it that thousands of His own followers have faced for His sake torments as great as, or even greater than His own (if the physical sufferings were all) with unbroken fortitude or even joy? It must have been mental anguish to Him to be forsaken by His disciples. True, and we can see the evidence of that in the narrative. But many of His followers have had to endure the loss of every human sympathy, but have been kept joyful and peaceful through the consciousness of His presence with them. Had this been all, would not the consciousness of His Father's presence

with Him have saved Him from such an agony of suffering? According to John, He Himself said in the Upper Room:

“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” John xvi. 32.

In the Garden His Father was with Him, for He addresses Him as “Abba, Father”: but, as we shall see, He was contemplating a time when He must address Him as “My God,” and ask Him, “Why hast thou forsaken me?”

It is said that He shrank from the awful depth of human sin which His betrayal and the malice of His enemies revealed. This is doubtless true also: but was it primarily from this that He asked to be delivered, if it might be? He knew already all about the hostility of His enemies: He well knew that it was no want of will that had prevented them from murdering Him long before; He had already felt the stab of anguish when he who ate His bread had lifted up his heel against Him (John xiii. 18; Mark xiv. 18-21). He had little more to face from that particular cause than that which He had already endured: for even if He had been delivered from death by His Father's power, the sin of His enemies in plotting His murder would have remained, and He had been brought face to face with their malignity again and again. The Gospel narratives show Him facing up to the sin of those who hated and rejected Him, and of the disciple who betrayed Him, and His leading thought is not His own suffering, but pity for their fate (Luke xiii. 33-35; xix. 41-44; Mark xiv. 18-21; Luke xxiii. 27-31). Surely it should be evident that in the Garden He was facing up to something unspeakably awful which *still lay before Him*, a cup of agony which He had yet to drink.

We turn to the narrative of the Crucifixion. If it were

true that the Son of God was indeed "bearing our sins in his body on the tree," if indeed He Who knew no sin were being made sin and becoming a curse for us there, we should expect to find some indication in the circumstances of His death that He was dying as Sin-bearer. What do we find? All the first three Gospels agree that from the sixth to the ninth hour there was a mysterious darkness over all the land, as though Nature were in sympathy with her Lord in His agony. Matthew and Mark also tell us that

"at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark xv. 34 (Matt. xxvii. 46).

Such a saying could never have been invented, if not really uttered: but how is it to be explained? In the mouth of anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ it could only have one of two meanings, either a failure, however temporary, of faith in the heavenly Father, Who never forsakes His trusting children; or an indication that sin had come between and hid His face so that He would not hear.

The faith of Jesus Christ never faltered: that explanation is absolutely inadmissible in His case. It would make Him inferior to many of His own followers who have endured as great physical sufferings and have been confident to the end in the sustaining presence of their Lord. Never, even for one moment, could He wrong His Father by losing trust in Him, and falsely supposing that He had been deserted by Him. It is painful even to have to name such a thing for the purpose of denying it. On the other hand we know that He was sinless, nothing He had ever done could by any possibility veil His Father's face.

It is important to get this matter quite clear, and it may help us to do so if we consider a different explanation of the cry on the Cross put forward in *The Atonement in*

*History and in Life* (pp. 241-242): "An actual experience of the sense of desertion, the loss of the serene joy of the Father's Presence, is a poignant part of the vicarious suffering of all who pass under the dark shadow of that guilt of loved ones which they take into their inmost being and make their own, through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts. How much more profound to Him, Who completely identified Himself with us in the bearing of our sin, is the sense of the withdrawal of the light of His Father's countenance. Actual desertion by God is unthinkable. A wrongful conception of the wrath of God and of His inflicting a penalty as satisfaction of offended justice is responsible for such an interpretation of this saying of Christ on the Cross."

The writer of these words has surely confused two quite distinct matters, the loss of the consciousness of God's presence, and the loss of the faith that He never forsakes His own. The former is not *necessarily* sinful, or the result of the sufferer's own sin; the latter is definitely sin, the sin of unbelief. Surely we know ourselves that, if we *do* lose the joy of God's presence, or if we are helping another who is in that case, what we need to tell ourselves, or that other, is just this: "Trust God in the dark, hold on by blind faith to the certainty that He never forsakes His own: stand on His promises, whether you *feel* His presence or not. He hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'" It is true that Old Testament saints do not infrequently ask God why He has forsaken them: but that is just one of the points where the Gospel revelation provides a clearer light. Away with the thought that our peerless Saviour could have failed in a test which He expects, and enables, His humblest followers to pass. If it had only been a *sense* of the loss of His Father's presence, His faith would have risen triumphantly above it. No, on *His* lips those words are unthinkable except as the expression of a very awful, objective reality. This reality may repel us when regarded as mere dogma, but when looked

upon as living truth it must surely inspire our worshipping love.

Place that cry of anguish side by side with the explanations of the Lord's death given by Paul and Peter, and at once what would otherwise have been unthinkable becomes explicable. At the same time the agony in the Garden is explained. For it is incredible that separate and independent causes can account for such an agony of shrinking beforehand and such a cry of unfathomable anguish when the time came. Somehow the Sinless One had become so identified with our sin that the hitherto unbroken fellowship between Him and His Father was broken for a time, and He *knew* (not imagined) Himself to be alone in the universe—and this He bore *for us*.

"Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21, R.V.

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13, R.V.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." 1 Pet. ii. 24.

For ourselves we can see no other tenable explanation of that cry from the Cross than this which is given by Paul and Peter.\*

\* An amazing explanation has been suggested, that our Lord was merely quoting Psalm xxii, and that what He applied to Himself was the song of triumphant faith with which the Psalm closes rather than the opening cry of agony which alone He is recorded to have uttered. What would our "liberal" friends say to such a theory advanced in the interests of a "conservative" position? To name only one conclusive objection: is it to be thought that the Lord Jesus would have uttered, in the hearing of others, words suggesting that He regarded Himself as forsaken of God, *if such were not the case*? And to suppose that He recited the whole Psalm when in the last extremity of mortal agony is also a supposition which carries its refutation on its face.



Suppose indeed that there were some other explanation, which could be maintained to be consistent with our Saviour's honour as the sinless Son of God. Even then, should not that explanation be preferred which satisfies the other evidence also? We have seen that the cry on the Cross can be regarded only as the sequel of the agony in Gethsemane. Whatever explains the one must explain the other also. The interpretation we have given does this and also agrees with our Lord's insistence on His death being the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, for He expressly applied to Himself a text from Isa. liii, and the words of Zechariah: "I (Jehovah) will smite the shepherd."

It may or may not be possible to explain away these lines of evidence separately, but surely their cumulative force is overwhelming: the more so, as we have already seen (Chapters I-IV) that His teaching about God demands and presupposes a propitiation for Sin. Can it still be contended that the "proof-texts" are *isolated* sentences? Are they not rather parts of a harmonious whole?

We conclude that the teaching of the Epistles on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is supported by the full weight of our Lord's own authority, and agrees perfectly with the historical narrative of His death. Whence came this harmony of so many different lines of teaching, if it be not from the Holy Spirit of Truth Himself?

## PART II: IS SUBSTITUTION IMMORAL OR INCREDIBLE?

### CHAPTER VII

#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

So far we have been dealing with one of the two fundamental objections to the doctrine that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins. We have examined the contention that this doctrine has no support in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ (apart at most from two or three isolated sayings), but that, on the contrary, it is opposed to the whole trend of His teaching about God and the forgiveness of sins. We have considered, too, the assertion that such support as this doctrine has in the New Testament is mainly limited to Paul, and that even he sometimes rose to a "higher" view of truth, especially in the great text 2 Cor. v. 18. It was essential that this objection should be dealt with first, for it really amounts to the claim that the New Testament is divided against itself, and that the most weighty part of its testimony is hostile to the teaching of atonement by the death of Christ in our stead. We heartily admit that no doctrine which is really opposed to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ can possibly be true, and if the Bible were really divided against itself in its teaching as to the means of our salvation, it could not possibly be the Word of God for us. Until, therefore, this fundamental objection had been answered, there could be no basis on which to discuss any other. And, as has been seen, it is a question which must of necessity be settled by examining the evidence of the New Testament.

But though that objection is a fundamental one for all

who believe in a substitutionary atonement, and defeat on this point would completely destroy our position, it is much less vital for those who reject substitution. For they claim that the doctrine of the Cross, as set out in these pages, is *immoral* and *incredible*, and until they can be satisfied on these points they will continue to reject any evidence that can be offered them from the Bible, even, in the last resort, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.\* For our part, we willingly acknowledge the importance of giving a reason for the faith that is in us, and of showing that the objections raised against the morality of substitution in part are not valid at all, and in part rest on a misunderstanding of the doctrine attacked.

But since misunderstanding has played a very important part, and it must be admitted that the doctrine of substitution has sometimes been stated in indefensible forms, it is necessary to make as clear a statement as possible of what is being defended—namely, what we believe to be the Bible doctrine of the Atonement. Of course a good deal of the ground has been covered in preceding chapters, but of necessity somewhat piecemeal: and at this stage it seems needful to attempt a connected statement.

Let it be quite clear, first, that this statement is intended, and is honestly believed, to be based on the Bible, and that there is no desire to defend anything which is not a legitimate inference from Bible words. On the other hand, the statement is not intended as in itself an argument to convince, or an attempt to beg questions by assuming what would not be granted. It is merely an attempt to set out in connected form the doctrine which is defended. But, as the writer's own belief rests on the conviction that the authority of the Bible is final, so *for the purposes of this statement* the final authority of the Bible will necessarily be taken for granted.

\* Ultimately, of course, these great questions are not settled by any appeal to the reason, but by personal experience of what the saving death of the Lord Jesus Christ can do.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DOCTRINE STATED

#### I. THE word "Atonement."

"Atonement" is simply the Anglo-Saxon form of "Reconciliation": but when applied to the *reconciliation of man with God* there enters into the word the idea of *cost*.

Much misunderstanding has been caused by confusing "atonement" with "redemption" and "salvation."\* The latter two words, as used in the Bible, are capable of a wider meaning than "reconciliation" ever has. Both words are indeed generally used as being practically synonymous with "reconciliation" or "forgiveness"—see, *e.g.*, Eph. i. 7; ii. 8, R.V. "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." "By grace have ye been saved through faith." But both are also sometimes used to cover the whole process of "sanctification" or "being made holy," which is not finally complete while this life lasts—see, *e.g.*, Eph. iv. 30; 1 Pet. i. 5, R.V.: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption." "A salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." In this process of building up the Christian character, not only what our Lord did on the Cross but also the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, the teaching and life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and indeed the message of the Bible as a whole, Christian fellowship in the Church and the means of grace, all have their part. It is therefore perfectly true that the death of Christ is not by any means the only (though the most important) agency in our "redemption" or "salvation," when these words are interpreted in the wider sense. But, as we shall see, "reconciliation" is never thought of as a process or as to be

\* This confusion of "atonement" and "redemption" underlies a great part of the argument of Bishop Headlam's book on the Atonement. See, *e.g.*, pp. 74-6.

completed in the future, but as a fact accomplished once for all on the Cross and immediately available for those who are willing to receive it by faith.

2. The need for *an* Atonement—*i.e.*, that God should do something costly to reconcile man with Himself.

"All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23, R.V.). This is not an isolated text, but the climax of a great proof, in which Paul draws on experience of the world around him and the evidence of the Bible to show that man has no hope of salvation in himself. Those words, "fall short of the glory of God," mean nothing if they do not mean that man cannot save himself, and left to himself must perish.

In the language of devotion we may say, "If Christ had not died, we should all be lost sinners without hope of redemption": for this is a true estimate of our deserts, and of the truth that our only hope is in Christ. Paul says plainly, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). (For a dead Christ would be no Saviour, and therefore the Resurrection is the completion and the evidence of the Atonement.) Yet, especially in reference to the death of Christ, there is danger in such language, for we need to be very careful how we say "If God had not done" something which He says He has done. It amounts to saying, "If God were not such a God as He has revealed Himself to be."

For God is Love; His Love has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and longs that all men should be saved. By the necessities of His loving nature it was impossible that He should let His creatures perish in their sin without finding a way by which they might be saved if they would. Only He cannot brush aside sin as of no consequence and forgive without atonement, for evil is absolutely abhorrent to His holy nature. He is Light, and "in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John i. 5). Our Lord's teaching on free forgiveness is no evidence that forgiveness is costless *to God*,



because He Himself spoke of Himself as a ransom instead of many, and of His blood as shed for many. Moreover, the awful judgments which He said that He would pronounce on those who reject or hypocritically misuse His salvation are evidence of God's attitude to sin. But it is clear from His teaching that this holiness, or justice, is that of the Triune God, not by any means that of the Father alone as distinguished from the Son, any more than the Love is that of the Son alone as distinguished from the Father. The more, then, we understand about the Love of God, the more clear it becomes how awful must be the reaction of His holiness against sin, which makes it possible and necessary for Him to pass such judgments. (See Chapters I-III.)

The need for *an* Atonement, then, is man's lost condition, his utter inability to save himself: and, on the other hand, the longing of the Love of God to save him, while nevertheless it was impossible, owing to His essential holiness, that He should tolerate or lightly pass over sin.

3. The need for *the* Atonement—*i.e.*, the particular method which God did actually choose for reconciling man, the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one less than God could make atonement for sin. In one of the sublimest passages of the Old Testament, Moses practically offered himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of Israel, but God refused it, saying, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Ex. xxxii. 31-33). In Ps. xlix the Psalmist remarks on the inability of men to offer a money ransom to redeem one another from death, and he goes on, "For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be let alone for ever" (Ps. xlix. 8, R.V.).

The New Testament represents the sacrifices of the Jewish Law as types and shadows of the one effectual sacrifice, which reveal the principle that "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sins (Heb. ix. 22), and thereby

point on to Calvary, but are of themselves ineffectual to take away sins (e.g., Heb. x. 4).

The sacrifice of Christ availed both because it was a willing sacrifice, and because He Who offered it was Himself sinless. But chiefly it was effective because He was Himself the Divine Son of God, infinitely excelling every type of Himself, and every other being in the universe, save God with Whom He is One. This is an essential part of the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

But it was also necessary that He Who should bear man's sin should be man: for, as we shall see, it is the essence of the New Testament doctrine of Substitution that the Substitute should also be the Representative.

"It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Heb. ii. 17, R.V.

"There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all."\* 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, R.V.

Only Jesus Christ could fulfil these necessary conditions, and therefore, if there was to be an Atonement, *He* must be "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2).

#### 4. Who originated the Atonement?

The notion of a "transaction" between the Father and the Son was doubtless introduced to make the mystery of the Atonement more easily comprehensible, but there is great danger in any such expression, which suggests belief in three Gods and has no foundation in Bible language. The Atonement originated in the Love of God, and God is Triune.

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he

\* The words "a ransom for all" are literally "a substitute-ransom (*antilutron*) on behalf of all."

loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 10.

"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. v. 8.

The Atonement was determined on "before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. i. 19, 20; Rev. xiii. 8), and foretold in the ancient Scriptures: for God foresaw from eternity what use man would make of his freewill, and that the Atonement would therefore be necessary.

The Bible speaks, it is true, of God "giving," "sending," "not sparing" His own Son (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 10; Rom. viii. 32), and even "him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. v. 21, R.V.), but that is partly due to the necessities of human language, which cannot express the mysteries of the Trinity, and partly because the Incarnation did involve a subordination in time of the Son to the Father. Nothing in this language can contradict the fact of the oneness of Father and Son, including, of course, a perfect unity of will. Again, in Gethsemane, the human nature of the Lord Jesus suffered awful agony in prospect of what lay before Him, even while He submitted in perfect obedience to His Father's will. But His Divine Nature had accepted the Incarnation for the express purpose of enduring that sacrifice.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour."\* John xii. 27, R.V., margin.

But although the Atonement was planned from all eternity by the Triune God, without the least difference of will between the Divine Persons, yet it was part of the Plan that one Person, the Son, should take our nature upon Him and suffer in our stead. He was the Lamb slain from

\* N.B.—These words were not said in Gethsemane, but at some earlier time in that last week.

the foundation of the world (Rev. xiii. 8). This was because, since God first began to reveal Himself at all, it has ever been through the Son (John i. 18).

The Atonement then originated, before time began, in the loving wisdom of God, the Three in One: but in the carrying out of the Divine Plan there was a difference of function. The Father "gave his Son" (John iii. 16), the Son "gave himself" (Gal. ii. 20); the Father "laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 6), the Son "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24): but all was in perfect unity of will, unity of holiness, unity of love. Paul expresses this unity of the Godhead in the Atonement when he says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).

5. What is the Atonement? We are thinking now only of the God-ward side of the Atonement, we shall consider later the man-ward side.

We have now come to the heart of the mystery: it is a mystery, yet surely not a sealed mystery in God's intention. We claim nothing more for the statement that follows than that it is a humble attempt to interpret the teaching of the Word of God on this great subject.

What is "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24)? There is a special reason why we should go first to Rom. iii. 25, 26\* for the answer. Paul here deliberately sets out to answer the question how it is that lost, guilty man, who has no righteousness of his own, can be acquitted at the Bar of God. This is what we find in those verses.

(a) God must be just (or righteous)—i.e., true to His own law of right, consistent with His own holiness. Paul does not attempt to prove this: for him it is an axiom. But he says that nothing less than the Cross of Jesus Christ was necessary in order that the forgiving merciful God might be just. *God must be just.*

\* These verses should be read in R.V., which is here materially better than A.V.

(b) God desires to justify, to count righteous, those who have no righteousness: nay more, *He has been doing it*, long before Jesus Christ came on earth. And the writer to the Hebrews tells us that the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins, so that the sacrifices in the Law are by themselves no answer to the problem of forgiveness. But, to justify the wicked is not just. God says Himself:

"If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." Deut. xxv. 1.

(c) God set forth Christ Jesus to be "a propitiation . . . by His blood." By His blood, not by anything else. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any justification for attempts to find the Atonement, the Reconciliation, in anything other than the death of Christ. Not even the resurrection was itself the means of the propitiation, though it was the evidence of its acceptance\* and the means of life and victory. Not even the Incarnation, though a necessary condition that a propitiation should be offered, was itself the means of the propitiation: see Heb. ii. 14-18; x. 4-14.

What does "propitiation" mean? As we saw in Chapter IV, it does not mean (as applied to the Cross) that which makes God well disposed. God has been infinitely well disposed to us from the beginning: the propitiation was devised by Him, because of His love for us, before time began. No, as the context in Rom. iii. 25, 26 shows, "propitiation" means that which satisfies the Divine Justice, and makes it possible for God to justify, and so to forgive, the sinner on condition of faith in Jesus.

But in Rom. iii. 25, 26, Paul does not explain *how* the Lord Jesus Christ could be a propitiation by His blood. It was enough for the purposes of that passage for him to say

\* But because the resurrection was the indispensable completion of the sacrifice, Paul could say that Christ "was raised for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25).



that He is so, that faith in Him Who has redeemed us by His blood is what saves us and nothing else can. But that word "redemption" in verse 24 implies a *cost*, and surely that cost is not expressed simply in terms of physical death. We turn therefore to another passage, 2 Cor. v. 14-vi. where Paul's purpose is quite different from that which lies behind Rom. iii. Here he is not deliberately setting out to explain how a holy God could justify those who had no goodness of their own. Rather, he is pleading as Christ's ambassador with unconverted members of the Corinthian Church, urging them to be reconciled to God. For this purpose he, like other preachers of the Gospel after him, dwells upon the wonder of God's love and the awfulness of the cost of redemption.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. . . . Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 19, 21, R.V.

In some mysterious way God identified His sinless Son with sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. When God looked on Him as He hung upon the cross, He saw our sin crucified there: just as, when He looks on us in Him, He sees righteousness, not ours but His own. Is this a fanciful explanation of Paul's words? Can they really mean anything else?

As has been remarked in Chapter IV (page 77, footnote), it is important to observe that Paul does not say, "He (Christ) made Himself to be sin on our behalf," as he must have written if he had meant no more than that the Lord so perfectly identified Himself by His Divine sympathy with us that in sorrowing for our sin He felt the shame of it as though it were His. We may accept this explanation as included in the larger truth, but more than this is meant here. But the beautiful balance of truth in the Word of

God is illustrated by the fact that whereas in this verse 21 the difference of function in the Divine Trinity is emphasized, "Him (the Son) who knew no sin He (the Father) made to be sin on our behalf," only two verses back Their perfect unity is as clearly stated, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

It has been shown in Chapters IV, V and VI how fully the teaching of Rom. iii. 25, 26 and 2 Cor. v. 19, 21 is corroborated elsewhere in the New Testament and in Isa. liii; not in texts torn out of their context, for the context in every case deepens and illuminates the message of the key text, as we have seen in the case of the two passages just considered. The Lord Jesus bore our sins in His body\* as a load that pressed upon Him like a physical burden: Jehovah laid on Him the iniquity of us all.† He became a curse for us; the curse, which the law lays upon those who fail to carry it out, was laid upon Him, and visibly expressed in His dying a death which the law calls accursed. So the words of the prophet were fulfilled: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised (Heb., pierced) for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." So He was a ransom in the place of many, a substitute-ransom on behalf of all. So we have been bought with a price, and are no more our own but His.

We turn back to Rom. iii. 25, 26. There Paul said that the Lord Jesus was set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, that God might be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus. We now see how the Bible says that this work of propitiation was accomplished. Our sin received the wages due to it, our substitute-ransom was identified with it and was nailed to the cross, bearing it in His body on the tree. So it became possible for God to be just and justify him that hath faith in Jesus.

But all this was the act of One God. The Atonement was planned by the One Triune God, and He Who bore

\* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

† Isa. liii. 6.

our sins in His Body on the tree is One with Him Who laid on Him the iniquity of us all.\*

Let us then attempt to sum up the answer to the question, "How could the death of Christ be a propitiation, if such be needed?" God is not only perfectly holy, but the source and pattern of holiness: He is the origin and the upholder of the moral order of the Universe. He *must* be just. The Judge of all the earth *must* do right. Therefore it was impossible by the necessities of His own being that He should deal lightly with sin, and compromise the claims of holiness. If sin could be forgiven at all, it must be on some basis which would vindicate the holy law of God, which is not a mere code, but the moral order of the whole creation. But such vindication must be supremely costly.

Costly to whom? Not to the forgiven sinner, for there could be no price asked from him for his forgiveness; both because the cost is far beyond his reach, and because God loves to give and not to sell. Therefore God Himself undertook to pay a cost, to offer a sacrifice, so tremendous that the gravity of His condemnation of sin should be absolutely beyond question even as He forgave it, while at the same time the Love which impelled Him to pay the price would be the wonder of angels, and would call forth the worshipping gratitude of the redeemed sinner.

On Calvary this price was paid, paid by God: the Son giving Himself, bearing our sin and its curse; the Father giving the Son, His only Son Whom He loved. But it was paid by God become Man, Who not only took the place of guilty man, but also was his Representative. Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died" (2 Cor. v. 14, R.V.).

\* By this emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity, and the fact that the sacrifice was truly offered by God, there is no intention of obscuring or qualifying what has been said above (pp. 123, 124), as to the necessity that He Who died for men should be Man as well as God. Only God could offer the sacrifice, but it is also true that only a sinless Man could die for men.

## 6. The man-ward side of the Atonement.

Atonement means reconciliation. We have seen how the Bible speaks of the God-ward side of reconciliation; how, through no deserving of our own, we can become acceptable in the sight of the just and holy God, through the sacrifice of the Cross, which His own eternal Love provided. But is there no change in us? Of course there is.

In the first place there must be a genuine turning to God on our part, or at the least a genuine desire to turn to Him, before there can be saving faith at all. The New Testament never says that reconciliation with God is something which He merely imposes on man from without. The words of Isa. iv. 7 are the teaching of the New Testament too.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7.

"What shall we do? . . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts ii. 37, 38.

"The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Rom. ii. 4.

I send thee to the Gentiles "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts xxvi. 18.

There must be an honest desire to forsake sin, otherwise there can be no genuine faith in the Saviour, Who died to save His people *from* their sins (Matt. i. 21) not *in* them. No theory of the Atonement which in any way beclouds this truth can justly represent the teaching of the New Testament.

Yet this in no way contradicts the fact that nothing



which we do ourselves, not even our repentance, is the ground of our salvation, by virtue of which we are saved. If our repentance were itself righteousness, and entitled us to be forgiven, then forgiveness would be a rewarding of merit. It has been well said, "Repentance is a turning away from sin, and a drawing towards the divine righteousness, but it is not itself righteousness, any more than the desire for a thing is the thing itself."\* The ground of our salvation is to be found only in what Christ did for us, which we lay hold of by faith.† So then, according to the New Testament, it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus that we are saved, and faith is the hand whereby we lay hold on that redemption: but repentance and turning to God are the essential condition of any honest desire for salvation at all, and, if this condition were lacking, "faith" would be an empty word. "The devils also believe and tremble" (James ii. 19).

What produces repentance? Surely the most powerful influence is the fact of the Cross itself.‡ That is why, as we have seen, Paul displays the glory of the atoning sacrifice of Christ when he pleads with the Corinthians to turn to God. That is what our Lord meant when He said,

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii. 32.

But just as in the New Testament one of the strongest statements of the substitutionary meaning of the Cross is

\* L. Arpee, *The Atonement in Experience*, p. 39.

† This statement does not mean that saving faith is merely a belief that Jesus died for us. Still less is it true that a correct understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement is essential to saving faith. Faith is in the Lord Jesus Himself, as able to save. "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" Nevertheless the only solid ground for such faith is the fact of the Cross.

‡ Of course we are not excluding the call of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit in producing conviction of sin and repentance: we mean that the fact of Calvary is His mightiest instrument in that work.



the heart of an impassioned appeal to the unreconciled to be reconciled to God, so it has been proved again and again in experience that it is the faithful presentation of the full Bible teaching of the Cross which has the power to win the hearts of men.

But there is more to be said about the man-ward aspect of the Atonement. The purpose of the Cross is not only to deliver the believer from the guilt of sin in God's sight. It is an essential part of the Reconciliation that it provides both a motive and a power for holiness of life. We are "born again," "new creatures in Christ," "created in Christ Jesus for good works." There is indeed another side to the truth that the Lord Jesus died as our Substitute. When by faith we lay hold on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we "become united with Him in His death." In other words, He died as our Representative, as well as our Substitute, therefore His death becomes our death, and not only have we in Him paid the penalty of sin, but also we have *died to sin*. That is to say, sin has no more rights over us, and we have no more right to have anything to do with it: of right, and in covenant, we are finished with it. And this union with our Representative and Substitute also gives us a share in His Resurrection—that is to say, it establishes for us a claim by faith on the power which raised Him from the dead. See, *e.g.*, Rom. vi. 1-11; 2 Cor. v. 14; Eph. i. 19, 20.

That is why in one aspect the Cross is a triumph over Satan. Sin is slavery, and the devil a cruel slavemaster (John viii. 34; Acts xxvi. 18; Heb. ii. 14, 15). Jesus Christ by His death and resurrection conquered the powers of evil (Col. ii. 15) and set the captives free, if they would claim their freedom. Hence the note of triumphant joy, the song of the freed slave, which we hear in such passages as Rom. viii. 31-39; Rev. i. 5, 6 (R.V.).

Thus the Cross is as far as possible from being a mere event of 1900 years ago, independent of us, on account of which by a "legal fiction" we are somehow forgiven.

"Forgiveness is not only because of Christ but in Him. . . . You cannot have forgiveness without having the Forgiver, without admitting Him to an inward union with your mind and heart and life."\* It is true that we are "justified by the blood of Christ" for no goodness of our own, but that very reconciliation is to us a new birth, a new creation, and His death and resurrection become to us the dynamic of victory over sin from the moment we are reconciled to God.†

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God (R.V., by faith in the Son of God), who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20.

To sum up the matter. The God-ward side of the Atonement is that God, Who could not overlook sin, came in the Person of the Son to bear our sins, in order that He might both be the perfectly just and holy God and also the Forgiver of those who believe in Him: or, to state the same fact in a different way, God "sent" His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The man-ward side of the Atonement is that the repentant sinner, who grasps by faith what God has done for him, is "justified" (*i.e.*, acquitted of his sin in the sight of Divine Justice) and therefore forgiven. But not only is this so. Why is he justified? Because, united by faith to his Substitute and Representative, he has died in Him (2 Cor. v. 14). But this means not only that he has "died to" the

\* Dr. Carnegie Simpson, *The Fact of Christ* (Expositor's Library Edition), p. 163.

† It is the indwelling Holy Spirit who makes vital and effective our union with Christ. Therefore, although the death and resurrection of Christ are the dynamic of victory over sin, it is only through the Holy Spirit that that dynamic becomes available for us. This opens up a very important subject outside the province of a book on the Atonement.

sin which crucified his Saviour, and must thenceforth by faith "reckon himself as dead" to it, but it also means that he has shared his Saviour's Resurrection to a new life, and that he can daily and hourly claim that resurrection power for victory over sin. He is not reconciled to God by anything that he is or has done, but the reconciliation is itself a birth to a new relationship with God and a new life in Christ.

7. Is our reconciliation to God a crisis or a process?

We have seen that there is the closest possible connection between the Atonement wrought by Christ and the new life which follows the acceptance of it. But, however closely connected, the two are distinct and ought not to be confused. We are not reconciled to God by being made holy, but in order that we may become holy. See, for example, Eph. ii. 1-10. The reconciliation is a crisis, a single great change in our relation to God: the new life is intended by God to be a process leading on to the final completion of redemption, the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

"If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10, R.V.

Clearly Paul looks upon the reconciliation as a single past change, not a present process: see verse 11 also, "we have now received the reconciliation." The same idea of a past change is clearly brought out in the following words:

"And such (fornicators, idolaters, etc.) were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11, R.V.

John says that those who receive Jesus Christ enter on a new relationship with God: they become His children by a new birth (John i. 12, 13), they already have eternal life as the result of that new relationship. The Atonement is the means provided by God to make possible this great change in the relations between man and Himself.

This, then, is the doctrine which lies, we are convinced, at the very heart of the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

##### NOTE A.—THE MEANING OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

The subject of this Note is to a great many people, of whom the writer is one, the holy of holies of the doctrine of the Cross, which does not make it easy to discuss it with those who feel very differently. Still, the fact must be faced that there are many whose attitude to the Cross is far from irreverent or hostile, who yet find real difficulties in that which to us is so sacred.

They ask, "Why does the New Testament lay so much stress on the *blood* of Christ? Even granting that His death is really the ground and basis of God's forgiveness of the believer, why not leave it at that? May it not be that the emphasis on the blood is merely the outward form of the revelation, inherited from Judaism? Some of us cannot help feeling a certain repulsion from this talk about blood. Are we not free to accept the essential truth, while rejecting the form which offends us? Would there be any real loss if the Gospel were presented without any mention of blood, substituting for it 'death' or even 'sacrifice'?"

In reply, two things must first be frankly admitted. The emphasis on the blood of Christ in the New Testament does come from the Old Testament. And the phrase "the blood of Christ" is a metaphor, it is spiritual language, not literal: when Peter writes, "elect unto . . . sprinkling of



the blood of Jesus," he is not thinking of literal, visible, material blood. But before concluding that therefore we are free, without spiritual loss, to discard this imagery, to treat it as *mere* metaphor of small importance compared to what it signifies, we should consider very carefully what we do.

Either the doctrine that the atoning sacrifice of Christ our Sin-Bearer was necessary to take away our sins is true, or it is not. If it is untrue, there is of course no basis for arguing about the blood of Christ, for all the sacrificial language belonging to the doctrine falls with it. But if it is true, then we have to ask, where do we get it from? If a doctrine so opposed to the taste and pride of the "natural man" is really true, surely this is a very powerful reason for concluding that man was not the originator of it. And if the Bible doctrine of the Cross is not a human invention, we are left with the alternative that it is a revelation of God.

Now that doctrine is revealed in its fulness in the New Testament. But the New Testament continually refers back to the Old Testament as the source of its teachings on this matter. If the doctrine really is true, the Divine source from which we get it refers us back to the Jewish sacrifices as the foreshadowings of it, designed by God more than a thousand years before the Lord Jesus Christ came. There is a marvellous unity of plan going through the Bible, and right at the centre of that unity is the principle, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins.

If it be objected that the prophets and prophetic Psalms were opposed to sacrifice, so that there was no real unity in the Bible on this matter, we reply that Heb. x. 5-10 helps us to a true interpretation of that opposition. Because the Mosaic sacrifices were only pictures, and not of themselves able to take away sins, God could and did declare that they were an abomination to Him when they were misused by hypocritical priests and worshippers. In such circumstances He could "take away" (Heb. x. 9) the old sacrifices,



that He might point forward by other means to the one Sacrifice which He had willed, which would be offered by a perfect High Priest, and from which the worshippers could obtain no benefit save by real repentance and heart faith. In the Sacrifice of Christ all that the prophets demanded, and all that the Law foreshadowed, found the complete fulfilment.

But supposing God Himself *was* the designer of the Old Testament sacrificial system, and really did intend it to foreshadow the one supreme Sacrifice, does it even then follow that He intended the sacrificial imagery to be more than the temporary scaffolding of His eternal building? Well, it is no light matter for modern man to imagine himself able to separate God's scaffolding from God's building (even if there were such a distinction) when He Himself has not made the separation in His Word. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is very emphatic in declaring that the Mosaic sacrifices were temporary, were only pictures of eternal realities. But when he speaks of those eternal realities, he places the blood of Christ in the very forefront.

But we have already admitted that to speak of the cleansing blood of Christ is to use spiritual not literal language. Let us examine more closely what blood means in the Bible, so that we may see what the real value of this imagery is.

"The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood. . . . For as to the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is all one with the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off." Lev. xvii. 11, 12, 14, R.V.

The blood represents the life: but the blood is never mentioned except in connection with the shedding of it, or with the use of it after it has been shed (except in the phrase "flesh and blood" as a synonym for "mortal man"). The blood shed is the life poured out, and the poured out life may be used only for atonement ("I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls"). If circumstances made this use of the blood impossible, it must be poured on the ground and covered with dust (Lev. xvii. 13). The superstition that whoever drinks the blood of a victim will be strengthened by that victim's life is sternly discouraged: it is a deadly sin to drink blood, it must be used only for atonement.

Blood was used in the Mosaic ritual in three main ways.

(1) As a general rule it was poured out on the altar, as a symbol of the poured out life of the victim offered to the Lord: as such it "made atonement" for the worshipper.

(2) It was also sprinkled on people and things to purify them or to consecrate them to the Lord, or to make a covenant between them and Him. Here we have the out-poured life of the victim applied to the sinner.

(3) It was also used on at least two occasions to avert Divine judgment. On the original Passover night, the blood of lambs was sprinkled on the door-posts of the Israelite houses, in order that the destroying angel, when he saw the blood, might not enter the house to slay the first-born. The high priest, when he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, must take with him blood to sprinkle on the mercy-seat, that he die not. Here the outpoured life of the victim is *used* as protection from the wrath which the offerer's sin deserved.

All these uses of the blood of animals were of course symbolic, for the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. But they were intended to be symbolic of something real, and the New Testament tells us that this reality was the blood of Christ—that is, *His* life poured out in death for our salvation.

As the high priest sprinkled blood on the mercy-seat, so Jesus Christ was "a propitiation, through faith, by his blood." It was by His life poured out in death and offered to God that He became a propitiation for our sins. There is something there which would be missed if we substituted "death" for "blood."

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The Life poured out in death, and applied to us; even as blood was sprinkled on the leper in the ritual of cleansing (Lev. xiv). The blood here is the sacrificial death *applied to us*. If it be true that His sacrificial death cleanses us, it is through "the blood" (with the Old Testament background which the Word of God provides) that the thought of the *application to us* of what He did *for us* is conveyed.

They "have washed their robes (*i.e.*, their character as seen by God), and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14). This is exactly the form of expression which gives most offence to some people. Yet here, too, we have a vital spiritual truth expressed by the imagery. What Christ did on Calvary 1900 years ago can be applied to me here and now, and can take away all the defilement of sin, and make me white in God's sight. How could the saints be said to wash their robes in the *death* of the Lamb?

We grant that the words are metaphorical, spiritual. We admit, too, that they have a history going back into the sacrifices of Judaism. But if the doctrine to which they belong is true, then He Who revealed the doctrine chose the imagery in which to express it, and we cannot afford to do without it.

Obviously the Gospel is greater than any phrases in which it is clothed. We are saved by the Saviour in Whom we believe, and by Him alone. Yet if He has revealed His way of salvation in His Word, we should do far better to accept His way of expressing Himself and not to try to improve on it, for we certainly shall not succeed.

## NOTE B.—CERTAIN TERMS DEFINED

1. "Ransom" (Greek, *lutron*).

This word had two types of association for the Jew.

(a) *A purchase-price*—e.g., the money which a man paid to get back his ancestral property when he had parted with it, or to buy the freedom of a relative who had become a slave (Lev. xxv. 25-27, 47-49). We shall see this conception in the New Testament under the words "redeem" and "redemption."

(b) *A substitute-price*. The first-born of human beings and all animals belonged to Jehovah; but those of men and of unclean animals had to be redeemed for a sum of money. The Septuagint of Num. xviii. 15 reads, "with ransoms (*lutrois*) shall the first-born of men be redeemed, and the first-born of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem." In like manner every male who was enumerated in the census had to pay a small money ransom for his life (Ex. xxx. 12, 13).

In the New Testament "ransom" occurs only in two phrases—"to give his life a ransom in the place of many" (*lutron anti pollon*: Mark x. 25; Matt. xx. 28), and "who gave himself a substitute-ransom on behalf of all" (*anti-lutron huper panton*: 1 Tim. ii. 6). In each case the idea of substitution is prominent, and shows that the closest parallel is with the substitute-ransom of the Old Testament. The Lord died instead of us, He gave as a ransom not corruptible things, silver or gold, but His own life. By our sins we were deserving of death, but He offered Himself as the ransom in our place.

It is important, however, to remember that in the interpretation of this word, as in the case of the kindred words "redeem," "redemption," the idea of the recipient of the ransom is not to be pressed. The ransom was the *cost* of our redemption.

## 2. "Redeem," "redemption."

In five instances the word "redeem" represents *agorazo* or *exagorazo*, meaning "purchase." The emphasis is then



on the cost of our salvation to the Lord Jesus, with the implication that we have thereby become His property. (See Gal. iii. 13; iv. 5; Rev. v. 9; xiv. 3, 4. See also 1 Cor. vi. 20, where *agorazo* is rendered "buy.")

The other words for "redeem"—(*apo*)*lutroumai*—and "redemption"—(*apo*)*lutrosis*—are connected with *lutron*, a ransom.

(a) In the Old Testament these words are commonly used of physical or material deliverance (e.g., Ex. vi. 6; Ps. cvii. 2). This same meaning appears in the New Testament in Luke xxi. 28, where the thought is that the Return of Christ will deliver His people from the terrible troubles that will be afflicting mankind in those days. It appears also in Luke xxiv. 21, referring to the expectations of the disciples. In Luke i. 68; ii. 38, there is probably some idea of spiritual as well as material deliverance, but in neither case is there any reference to an atoning death.

(b) Elsewhere these words are used in four passages in the sense of the removal of the guilt of sin at the cost of the Saviour's blood. (See Rom. iii. 24; Heb. ix. 12-15; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.) The context in all these passages throws the emphasis on the Saviour's work of putting us right with God: only in the Colossians passage is there any mention of the accompanying deliverance from the power of sin (Col. i. 13), and even there the word "redemption" is explained as "the forgiveness of our sins."

(c) Twice they are used of redemption *from sin*.

"Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works." Titus ii. 13, 14, R.V.

The primary thought here is of deliverance by sacrifice from the defilement of sin.

"Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain



manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, R.V.

The main thought here is the infinite value of the price that was paid for our deliverance from sin, but the idea of deliverance from its power also comes in.

To sum up, in those passages where "redeem," "redemption," refer to the atoning work of Christ, the idea of deliverance from the defilement of sin and of being put right with God is much more prominent than the idea of deliverance from the power of sin: and where the latter thought does enter, it is connected with sacrifice.

(d) In three places (Rom. viii. 23; Eph. i. 14; iv. 30) "redemption" refers to the future completion of our salvation.

### 3. Satisfaction.

This word does not occur in the New Testament, and needs to be used with the greatest caution, and with the reservation that what we mean by it is what the New Testament means by the language which it does use—e.g., the Lord Jesus died as a ransom instead of many; God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. "Propitiation" is the nearest Biblical equivalent of "satisfaction."

The danger in the use of the word "satisfaction" is that it is associated with the theory that the Man Jesus Christ, primarily in His capacity as Man, offered to God an equivalent satisfaction in place of the penalty due to our sins, and that His Divine Nature only enters into the matter as giving an infinite worth to His sacrifice. This theory is indeed not so much false as inadequate. It does not express the truth as the Bible expresses it, and it obscures a vitally important aspect of truth which the Bible emphasizes.

The initiative was with God, not with man: not even with the Lord Jesus *as Man*. God provided the propitia-

tion which satisfied His own justice. God came Himself in the Person of the Son, Who "being from the first in the form of God counted it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God."\* As Man, it is said of Him that He was "obedient even as far as death,"\* and He Himself said, "Father, not my will, but thine, be done." Although it is true that He had to become man in order that He might be a representative and substitute for man, and that it might be possible for us to be united with Him in His death, it is nevertheless a fact of supreme importance in considering the meaning of His sacrifice, that He was One with the Father.

At the risk of tedious repetition, we must insist (as Bishop Aulen rightly insists in *Christus Victor*) that the sacrifice was both planned and offered by God. In type (Gen. xxii) and in direct statement (John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32) we are given glimpses into the cost of the Atonement to God as Father. And the ethical meaning of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is made far clearer by the recollection that He Who hung upon the Cross had proclaimed Himself as the Judge Who would one day judge the world.

The term "equivalent" is sometimes joined with or substituted for "satisfaction." Here, also, the present writer feels uneasy in the use of terms which have no obvious or direct Scripture basis. They may be capable of explanation which would make them square with what the Bible does say, but there is a suggestion of a kind of balancing of our Lord's sufferings in quantity against the guilt of mankind, which is open to attack, and does not seem to be inherent in the words of Scripture.

#### 4. Vicarious Punishment.

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Isa. liii. 5.

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13.

\* Literal translations from Phil ii. 6, 8.

"It is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Mark xiv. 27.

He bore the punishment of our transgressions, the punishment needed to bring us peace. This is an essential part of the plan of Redemption. So completely indeed did He bear the chastisement of our peace that for a time our sins came between Him and His Father, and caused Him to utter that cry of agony, which nothing but the terrible fact could have wrung from Him. Yet we must be very careful in stating the truth of vicarious punishment not to go beyond what is written. Expressions like "God punished Christ," and still more "God was angry with Christ," should not be used. We must not forget John x. 17:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again."

It may seem a contradiction in terms, yet it is true, that never was the Lord Jesus more the "beloved Son" in Whom the Father was well pleased than when He was willing to accept the uttermost consequences of our sin, even to the breaking for a time of fellowship with His Father.

But we can come to no terms with theories of "vicarious suffering" which admit no more than sympathy-suffering, as when a mother suffers the shame of her son's sin. As against such teaching we must insist with Isa. liii and the New Testament that the Saviour was a true Substitute, Who suffered the chastisement of our peace and was made a curse for us, and it is to that great outpouring of His Love that we owe our salvation. But let us never forget that He was the Lawgiver suffering the penalty of His own Law, even though in order to do so He had to take upon Him the nature of His rebellious creatures.

## CHAPTER IX

### IS SUBSTITUTION IMMORAL?

In the last chapter an attempt was made to state what we believe to be the New Testament doctrine of the Atonement. It is an essential part of that doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ died in our place, the just for the unjust, taking upon Him our sins and bearing the penalty needful to bring us peace with God. Many people have a strong, or even passionate, conviction that any such doctrine is fundamentally immoral. Now this conviction rests in part on a conception of God's relationship to the sinner and His attitude to sin, which in Chapters I-V has been shown to be radically different from that of Jesus Christ and of the New Testament writers in general. But it also very largely rests on the belief that the whole idea of vicarious punishment is in itself immoral, and that nothing can possibly justify it.

Now it is difficult for our minds to think of Divine things without using human analogies, but these analogies are often very dangerous, and never more so than in the doctrine of the Atonement. It must be admitted that "conservative" preachers and writers, in their desire to make the doctrine clear, have sometimes used human analogies in an indefensible manner, and have thereby unintentionally given real ground for objection. It is quite true that it would be altogether immoral that a judge should sentence an innocent person, however willing, to suffer death in place of a convicted murderer. But this analogy has nothing whatever to do with the doctrine of the Atonement as taught in the Bible.

In the human transaction there are four distinct parties beside the guilty criminal. These are first, the judge; secondly, the innocent substitute; thirdly, the wronged

party, that is the family of the murdered man, and through them the whole community; fourthly, the King, representing the law of the land, to whom the judge is under oath to administer true justice. Even if it be granted that the innocent substitute could by his voluntary consent surrender his own rights, the judge's action would be a double outrage against the wronged party and against the law, which he has sworn to administer. He would be committing one crime against both these parties by releasing the murderer, and another against the law at least by ordering the execution of the substitute. So far we are entirely at one with the objectors.

But in the doctrine of the Cross as taught in the Bible the case is very different. There is the condemned criminal, the guilty sinner. But beside him there is only One, Who is Judge, Wronged Party, King (or Law), and Substitute. God was not administering someone else's law, but His Own, and the sin was not committed against someone else but against Him: and above all He did not take someone else and accept him as substitute for the condemned sinner (He refused an offer of this kind when made by Moses, Ex. xxxii. 30-35), but He came Himself, took upon Him the nature of the guilty ones, and bore the penalty of His own Law. The Substitute who died on Calvary expressly declared Himself to be the Judge of the world (Matt. xiii. 41-43; xxv. 31-46).\*

Instead, therefore, of a judge punishing an innocent third

\* A serious objection has been raised against the line of argument here followed, that it attributes suffering and death to God. Now it is quite true that God, or the Divine Nature of Christ, cannot suffer death or even physical pain. But first it has been shown in Chapter VI that by far the most terrible of the sufferings of Christ were not physical at all. Suffering other than physical is possible to God (Isa. lxiii. 9). Secondly, in any case, the point which we are making is not affected by this objection, for He Who suffered and died was *One Being with the Eternal God*, and it still remains true that God did not take *someone else* and lay on him the iniquity of us all.



party in place of the criminal, we have a Triune Judge, One of Whose Persons identifies Himself with the nature of the criminal in all except his sin, then takes the sin itself upon Him, and suffers the penalty of His own Law, which indeed has no existence independent of Him. Moreover, not only is there this identity between the Substitute and the Judge, but also in a mysterious sense between the Substitute and the criminal, when the latter becomes willing to accept the identification. Can this be termed immoral?

Dean Rashdall says, "We cannot admit it to be just that . . . though it is a matter of indispensable justice to punish sin, it is immaterial whether it is the guilty person who is punished or someone else."\* We are very far from asking for such an admission! "Someone else"! Is then the Lord Jesus Christ just *anyone*? As we saw in Chapter VIII, the Bible makes it very clear that no man can be a substitute even for one other fellow man.

"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be let alone for ever." Ps. xlix. 7, 8, R.V.

But the clear rule here laid down cannot apply to the case of the Divine Man, Who, as Son of Man, represents the whole race before the Father, and, as Son of God, is the Lawgiver and Judge bearing the penalty of His own Law. This Substitution is something altogether of its own kind, to which there is no true parallel in the universe, and the very Book which teaches it declares the impossibility of any substitutionary atonement other than this.

But we may freely admit that the Bible doctrine of vicarious punishment is not defensible apart from a full recognition of the Bible teaching of the Divinity of Christ. For if the Victim is not truly identical with the Judge, then the sacrifice is of a third party, and becomes unjust.

\* *The Idea of Atonement*, p. 423.

A quotation from a popular book may help to make the point clear. "Are we being asked to believe that the sins of Abraham and Judas, and the sins I haven't committed yet but am going to commit next week, have in some magical sense been transferred to the innocent head of Christ? Is this justice? Does it make it into justice that the Victim is willing, or that the Judge is the Father of the Victim and dwells in Him more intimately than any human figure can illustrate?"\* The suggestion in the first part of this quotation, that there is something magical and incredible in the doctrine attacked, will be considered in the next chapter. For the present we are concerned with the accusation of injustice.

What does the writer mean by those words, "the Judge is the Father of the Victim and dwells in Him more intimately than any human figure can illustrate"? God dwells in every true child of His. Is the meaning of those words that the Victim, though Son of God, is only a Man in Whom His Father dwells in an altogether exceptional degree? That, however intimate is His fellowship with God, He is nevertheless a distinct Being from Him? If so, we admit the force of the objection, *on that supposition*: but we reply that such a Being is not the Christ Whom we worship, Who said, "Before Abraham was, I AM," the Word Who in the beginning was with God and Himself was God.

On the other hand, perhaps the writer of those words would repudiate the interpretation we have suggested; perhaps he does mean to imply that the Judge and the Victim were really One. If so, we reply that the objection then loses all its force. Let it be re-worded to say plainly what, on this supposition, it really means. "Is this justice? Does it make it into justice that the Victim is willing, or that He is One with the Judge in the unity of the Triune God Who planned so to redeem mankind?"

\* *The Transforming Friendship*, by Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, p. 143.

Where is the force of the objection now? How can it be unjust that God should Himself suffer that He might righteously forgive?

It might perhaps be replied, "We do not admit this full identity of Christ with God: we grant that He was in a sense Divine, but not in that sense. It is useless to try to prove your case by assuming something which we do not grant." But this is not a fair statement of the case. The point is this: Do the objectors understand what it is that they are attacking? Our case is not that a semi-Divine Man, or a Man Who was Divine in an ethical sense only, or Divine only in a higher degree than all men are divine, bore the penalty of our sins. If that is their conception of the doctrine let them reject it by all means: we have no more use for it than they have. Our hope of salvation rests on the sacrifice offered for us by the Son of God, One with the Father, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Who is coming to judge the world.

Again the question is sometimes asked, in order to prejudice men's minds against this doctrine, "Would all humanity have gone to hell if Jesus had not died? Do we expect the man-in-the-street to believe God is that kind of person?" The question is not only irreverent but completely beside the mark. As was pointed out in the last chapter (p. 122), it amounts to saying, "If God were not such a God as He has revealed Himself to be." Being what He is, He was not willing that man should perish without hope, and it was for that very reason that He provided the Atonement. On the other hand, in so far as the objection is that God was not willing (or rather morally able) to forgive without an atonement, it has been answered in Chapters III and IV. "Jesus forgave men without demanding atonement." Of course He did! Could the poor penitent sinner provide one? God forgives us without demanding atonement *because He Himself has provided it*, and we never could. Paul says that every act of Divine

forgiveness in all time (which, of course, includes those of the Lord Jesus on earth) rests on the basis of the sacrifice of the Cross (Rom. iii. 25, 26).

Another objection has been worded thus: "By this theory God's forgiveness is free indeed to the sinner, but only free because it has been paid for. There is no room for the exercise of God's love: for after legal payment of the penalty, remission is only an act of justice."\* The form of this objection is to some extent provoked by a harsh statement of the doctrine of vicarious punishment in terms which go beyond the teaching of the Bible: but making allowance for that, it is an amazing argument. Whose love provided the Atonement in the first instance? Who "commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"? Is not the Cross itself an outpouring of the love of God before which we can only bow in worship? Nor is this all. Who sought the sinner, pleaded with him, aroused in his heart the desire for repentance, convinced him of sin? None but God could do that. Moreover, it is the supreme glory of the Cross that salvation is offered free because God has paid the price. To think that that should be made a ground of cavil! No room for the exercise of God's love!

"After legal payment of the penalty, remission is only an act of justice." When we believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour, we believe that our sins *were* taken away on the Cross through the infinite love of God. If faith staggers before the marvel that we who so little deserve forgiveness can nevertheless be forgiven, we may be reminded of such a promise as that in 1 John i. 9.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful (true to His promises) and just (true to the eternal Law of Righteousness) to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

\* Dr. Douglas White, *The Nature of Punishment and Forgiveness*, pp. 11, 12.

But how astounded would the rejoicing new-born soul be if someone were to say, "Oh, if your forgiveness is only a matter of God keeping His word and being just (which He must be in any case) there is no room for love in His forgiveness of you." Is there not Love in the giving of the promise, and is there not wonderful Love in the Sacrifice whereby forgiveness is perfectly reconciled with justice?

But there is another class of objection to be considered, "Even if it were just that Christ should suffer in our stead how can it be just that we should be treated as free from sin when we are not, merely because we believe in what Christ did 1900 years ago? We believe that God's love wins the sinner to love Him, and then God gradually changes him, and only as he really becomes holy can God regard him as such. Your doctrine attributes pretence to God." To some extent this objection rests on a misunderstanding. It was made clear in the last chapter that saving faith is not a mere intellectual belief in a historical fact, but a personal trust in Jesus as able to save from sin, from its power as well as its guilt. Obviously, therefore, it must spring from a genuine desire to forsake sin. The man whom God justifies is not a sinner who proposes to continue as such, and merely seeks a "clean sheet" before God's judgment. He is one who acknowledges his sinfulness, owns his helplessness to save himself, and looks to the Saviour to save him, in order that he may live for Him henceforth.

But this explanation does not remove the whole difficulty. When Paul spoke of God as "He that justifieth the ungodly," he really did mean that God treats the believer as righteous when He knows very well that in himself he is not. This is what some people regard as a pretence. But there is no pretence or sham about it. In His judgment of us He deals with us as one with our Substitute Who has borne our sins, and *in Him* we become "righteous"—that is, entitled to acquittal—and the barrier which



our sins have put between us and Him is removed. The awful agony of the Cross was borne by the Son of God for the very purpose of making this possible. But He does not pretend by any means to regard us as being in ourselves holy. On the contrary, from the moment that He "justifies" us He gives us His holy Spirit with the intention that we may *become* holy. He will never be satisfied with anything other than real actual holiness in us.

But what if one who has been truly reconciled to God falls into sin afterwards? Is it *then* true that God does not see him as he really is, but only as he is in Christ? If we answer this question in the affirmative, do we cut away the ground from the argument that we are only treated as righteous in order that we may become holy? No, for it is clear in the New Testament that not even a child of God can have fellowship with Him while holding on to sin. It must first be confessed and honestly repented of, and brought to the Cross. (See 1 John i. 5-ii. 2.)

The great difference which the reconciliation makes is that from that moment the reconciled one is a child of God, and the searching demands of His holiness are those of a Father from Whom His child can obtain the means of fulfilling them. In the New Testament there is a double line of teaching, on the one side aimed at the encouragement of faith, and on the other at the discouragement of presumption. On the one hand, for the justified and reconciled child of God there is no condemnation (Rom. viii. 1), he "shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). On the other hand, the whole purpose of that free gift of salvation, by faith and not by works, is that there may be a new life of holiness (Eph. ii. 8-10): "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20): "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7).

It is then a libel on the doctrines of substitutionary Atonement and justification by faith to say that they

attribute pretence to God. There is no pretence, the demands of His holiness are not one jot abated. But that which gives rise to the accusation of pretence is God's determination that the sinner shall humbly own that he has no merit on which he can stand before Him. God's forgiveness is and must be of grace and not of our deserving.\* That is why the New Testament insists that God justifies the *ungodly*. He does not first make him good, and then accept him because he is good, for that would be to recognize "merit." He works in the opposite order. He accepts the penitent sinner when he has absolutely no merit, but He accepts him in order that He may change him into the likeness of his Saviour.

\* "All mercy, all forgiveness, is of the nature of fiction. It consists in treating men better than they deserve. And if we, being evil, exercise the property of mercy towards each other, and exercise it not rarely out of consideration for the merit of someone else than the offender, shall not our Heavenly Father do the same?"—Sanday and Headlam, "Romans" (*Intern. Crit. Comm.*), p. 94.

## CHAPTER X

### IS SUBSTITUTION INCREDIBLE?

In the last chapter an attempt was made to answer objections to the morality of a substitutionary atonement. But there is another type of objection which attacks the doctrine as absurd and incredible.

Some of these objections are based on the idea of *time*. How can the death of One who died 1900 years ago be actually the direct means of our forgiveness to-day? This objection is not only raised by those who reject the doctrine, but it is often a very real spiritual difficulty to people who earnestly desire to accept it.

The first thing to be said in reply to this is that if the Son of God came down from heaven to die for sinners, as we believe, it surely was not for one human generation only: else "must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world." At least thirty years after the Crucifixion it was written of Him, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "Our sins" must mean (at least) the sins of the writer and those to whom he wrote. Of the latter it is unlikely that any had ever seen the Lord, and a great part of their sins must have been committed since His death. There is no essential difference between their case and our own. Again, John quotes the Baptist as saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Combine these statements with those of Paul in Rom. iii. 25, 26, and the natural conclusion is that the New Testament intends to teach that the sin which the Lord bore in His body on the tree is nothing less than all the sin of the human race from the beginning till sin shall be no more. Because the New Testament teaches a substitutionary Atonement, of necessity it also teaches that the sin borne by the Substitute was that of all men in all ages.

Of course this is a two-edged argument. Some people would draw from it the conclusion that since a substitutionary theory of the Atonement necessarily involves this incredible consequence, that alone is sufficient reason for rejecting it. But why is the consequence incredible?

This brings us to a second observation, which is that it is generally agreed that *time is nothing to God*. As far, therefore, as He is concerned, the question of time simply does not arise. If He could regard the death of His Son as a propitiation for sin at any time, then questions of when the sin was committed, before or after the atoning Sacrifice, are irrelevant: for He is the I AM, and with Him all time is one.

Such certainly was Paul's view of the Atonement. The Death of Christ was "a propitiation . . . to shew his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." God had been forgiving penitent sinners from the beginning, though the ground of His forgiveness had not been declared. But for Himself the sacrifice of the Cross was as present in the days of Abraham as on the day of Calvary. That is why, in the Revelation, our Lord is spoken of as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. xiii. 8).

Then Paul goes on to say that the same principle applies in his own time, twenty-five years after the Crucifixion. "For the shewing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). That is to say, just as the death of Christ revealed to men on what ground God had forgiven people who died long before Christ was born, so the same sacrifice explains the present forgiveness of those whose sins were committed long after His death. If God is independent of time, as all admit, is this teaching really so incredible?

Thirdly, it is quite true that man is not independent of time: but his part in the reconciliation is definitely present. We repent and believe, and by a present act of

faith we are united with our Substitute. And although He died for all, and bore the sins of all, yet only those who believe in Him are reconciled and cleansed. (See Chapter VIII, p. 134, on "The man-ward side of the Atonement.")

Here, then, is the answer to the objection against the Atonement from the fact of sin in the world. "Does Jesus take away in one act the sins of the whole world? Sin remains, and curses the world—it cannot mean that."\* Yes, sin does remain, because the world rejects Jesus. Sin remains, until he who commits it becomes one by faith with Him Who bore it for him.

But the interval of time between the Crucifixion and the present day is not by any means the only time difficulty. "Granted that the interval of 1900 years can be disregarded, there is another impossibility. Suppose a man believes in Christ for the first time when he is twenty years old: you say that his sins are then forgiven because they were laid on Christ when He died. But what was the position before the man believed? If he was then bearing his own sins, how could it become true at a later time that they were laid on Christ before he was born? If the interval were fifty years instead of 1900, would it not still be unreal, magical, incredible?"

This difficulty arises from confusing spiritual things with material. We should all admit that it would be nonsense to say that I got rid of a tumour last week because the doctor took it away last year. Such language could have no meaning. But sin is not a material thing weighing so many pounds. The words, "My sins were laid on Jesus," are a *metaphor*, describing in picture language a very real spiritual fact. When the Bible tells us that Jesus "took away the sin of the world," "bore our sins in his body on the tree," it certainly does not mean that the burden of sin which He bore was automatically lifted (or destined to be lifted) from those who committed sin, independently of any repentance or desire for God on

\* *The Transforming Friendship*, p. 143.



their part! That would be magical indeed, and utterly immoral too. The unrepentant sinner must bear his own sin (*i.e.*, the responsibility for it), *though* Jesus bore it for him. When, however, he accepts forgiveness, by accepting the Forgiver, he is set free from the burden, *because* Jesus bore it for him. Is there anything magical in this? Of course there is mystery, but given that the Love of God is so wonderful that He should be willing to do this great thing for us, surely there is nothing incredible so far.

But the difficulty which we have just considered can be presented in another form. When a man is reconciled to God, he is not immune from temptation, and he does not reach a state of sinless perfection. "Are we being asked to believe," says the objector, "that . . . the sins I haven't committed yet, but am going to commit next week, have in some magical sense been transferred to the innocent head of Christ? . . . How could He pay in the past a debt which I have not yet fully scored up in God's account? Can blood that flowed two thousand years ago wash that away?"\*

"The sins I am going to commit next week" is a very dangerous form of expression: it might be taken to mean, "The sins I intend to commit next week." In that case, the only possible answer would be, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7). We do not indeed suppose for a moment that this was really the meaning intended, but it is necessary to clear the ground by dealing with a meaning which the words in themselves certainly do not exclude.

Let it be taken for granted, however, that the meaning is, "I dare not assume that I shall go through next week without committing a single sin: but if I do sin, how can such sins have been taken away before I have committed them?" In answering this objection it is necessary to some extent to repeat what has already been said.

First, Christ is the Lamb of God, Who took away on the

\* *The Transforming Friendship*, pp. 143, 144.

Cross the sin of the world. Long before I believed on Him He had borne my sin, or (to change the metaphor) He had paid enough to cover my utmost debt. Yet till I believed on Him as Saviour, my sin remained and I was responsible for my debt.

Secondly, when I did believe, I was reconciled to God through the Cross, and became His child, and all my past sin was put away, my debt was cancelled.

Thirdly, having become a child of God through union with His Son, I have a new relationship with Him. But if unhappily I sin after I have entered into that relationship, I need to be *cleansed* from that sin, which would otherwise break my fellowship with my Lord. The sin must be truly repented of and confessed, and cleansing claimed through the blood of Christ. It is, no part of Bible teaching that the believer is cleansed from sin before it is confessed and repented of. (See 1 John i. 5-ii. 2, and Chapter IX above, p. 153.)

In other words, this objection simply arises from confusing two distinct things, first, the atoning value in God's sight of the death of His Son; and, secondly, our acceptance of His salvation through faith. The former is timeless: time-relation can have no meaning with regard to it, for God is independent of time. The effects of the sacrifice of Calvary in making it possible for Him righteously to forgive sin are eternal; they extend backwards to the first sin committed on earth, and forwards to the last. But our acceptance of salvation is quite another matter. We are not timeless, and what was done for us on the Cross can benefit us only when we take it on God's condition, and this acceptance must take place at some particular time. So then there is nothing magical or absurd (very much the contrary) in the assertion that sin which has not yet been committed was borne by Christ on the Cross. But, of course, the sinner is not freed from the pollution of future sin: for he cannot be cleansed from sin till he has himself repented of it, and claimed the cleansing by faith.

Akin to these time-difficulties is an objection based on the idea of quantity. The question is often asked, "How could a few hours' suffering of the Substitute be equivalent to hell even for one sinner, much less for the whole human race?"

There is some similarity between this objection and the argument that it is incredible that the Creator of the unimaginably vast universe revealed to us by modern science should take much notice of one infinitesimally small fragment of it. Both arguments take no account of the fact that quantity, bulk, length of time, and length of distance are conceptions of very little significance in the spiritual world in comparison with *quality*. We ourselves regard a man as much more important than many elephants, though he is so much smaller. If even we finite creatures can, to a limited extent, disregard quantity in comparison with quality, how much more does God, Who is infinite!

The reply, then, to this objection is that the importance of the sacrifice of the Son of God is not to be measured by the duration in time of His sufferings, but by their quality, and above all by the quality of Him Who suffered. Remember that, according to the New Testament, He Who suffered was the Incarnate Word of God, Who in the beginning was with God, through Whom the universe was created, Who declared Himself to be the Judge of the world. It is said of Him that He, the Holy One, Who is opposed to sin as light is to darkness, was brought into such close spiritual contact with the sin of the world that in a mysterious sense He became identified with it, and bore its curse: so much so that He endured the uttermost agony of a break in fellowship with Him with Whom He is eternally One: and, finally, He, the Resurrection and the Life, bowed His head to death. How is it possible to estimate the spiritual meaning of the sufferings of such a Sufferer in terms of earthly hours and minutes?

Quantity is a conception wholly out of place in considering the sufferings of our Saviour: the very idea of balanc-

ing those sufferings in quantity against the doom of lost mankind is entirely alien to the Bible. There is never so much as a hint of such a thing. But if we think in terms of spiritual quality, surely it is not incredible that such sufferings endured by the Judge Himself should be adequate to "propitiate" His eternal justice, and make it possible for Him righteously (and gladly) to forgive the sinner who truly turns to Him.

Then there is a much more fundamental difficulty than anything to do with time or quantity. It is argued that guilt is, in its own nature, incapable of being transferred from one person to another, even if that Other were the Son of God Himself.

Sometimes this objection seems to rest on a misconception as to what guilt is. "Does it (the death of Christ) remove my guilt? Does it remove the effect of sin in me? Is it not one of the most awful facts about sin that I become identified with it? It has passed into the very fibre of my being and made me what I am. Would to God that someone could take it . . . and carry it for me." "The deadly thing about our past sins is that they are not past: they are now part of ourselves. . . . They have gone to make us what we are, and they are alive and incarnate in us to-day, estranging us from God, in Whom alone is our peace. The only way to be saved is to be changed from what we are. . . . We cannot, therefore, be saved by anything that is merely external to ourselves, nor by anything that is in the past."\*

Observe how guilt is defined in these quotations. It is said to be the effect of sin on us, on our character, our moral and psychological make-up. We do not admit this definition of guilt. These writers are confusing the automatic *penalty* of sin, in its evil effects on ourselves, with the *responsibility* for sin which we incur in God's sight. The latter surely is what guilt is.

\* *The Transforming Friendship*, pp. 143, 144. *The Meaning of the Cross*, by W. R. Maltby, D.D., p. 10.



However, something much more important than a question of definition of terms is here. Is it true that sin passes into the fibre of our being in such a way that even after we have been reconciled to God we must cry in despair, "Would to God that someone could take it"? God forbid. The Saviour is mightier and better than that. Yet there is a grain of truth in the error, enough to make it dangerous!

On the one hand, the experience of thousands of freed slaves of sin is that when Jesus delivers us from the burden of guilt He does most wonderfully change us ourselves. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Sometimes the very desire for a sin which had had full dominion over the sinner is taken away. But, on the other hand, deliverance from guilt is not always accompanied by complete deliverance from the automatic consequences of sin. Just as the body of a truly reconciled child of God may suffer all through life from excesses (now completely forgiven) committed before conversion, so the soul may, and often does, carry scars. If we have long yielded to a particular sin, we may have opened up avenues of temptation which will remain open for us in a way that they do not for others.

But this is a very different thing from guilt. Temptation is not itself sin, and though we may have a harder time of it than others who have not so fallen, our Redeemer is strong, and there is *never* any necessity for a child of God to fall. It is always true, if we are His children, no matter how much we may have poisoned and corrupted our souls by sin before we turned to Him, that he is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God through Him.

But even when guilt is given its true sense of the stain of sin and our responsibility for it, it still remains that many people feel that it cannot be transferred to anyone, even to Christ, because it is of its own nature non-transferable. Is not this to limit God? Guilt is not responsibility to an abstract law of right and wrong inde-



pendent of God. It is responsibility to *God*. Is it incredible that He, under conditions that seem right in His eyes, can lift that responsibility from us and take it upon Himself in Christ?

"But," it may be said, "guilt surely includes responsibility for wrong done to our fellow man. Can that be transferred to Christ?" First, we must remember that repentance, without which saving faith is impossible, involves the readiness to make restitution for wrongs done to others, in so far as lies within our power.

"If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt. v. 23, 24, R.V.

Secondly, it may be quite impossible to undo the evil effects on others of our past sin, or even to make any restitution or reparation at all, and, in that case, we may have to bear all our lives the sorrow of knowing that this is so. But, thirdly, given the readiness on our part to do all that we can to make restitution, the guilt, as before God, of that sin against a fellow man, can be, and we believe that it is, utterly taken away by the Cross, through faith.

As for the statement, "We cannot be saved by anything merely external to ourselves, nor by anything that is in the past," we deny that the death of Christ can be considered as something merely external to ourselves. It certainly was not so regarded by Paul (see, *e.g.*, Rom. vi. 1-11; Gal. ii. 20). It is external to us in the sense that we can do nothing to save ourselves, but must receive by faith what Christ did for us. But the moment we do so receive it, or rather Him, that Event becomes anything but external to us: it is the source of our new life, the price which has purchased us body, soul and spirit, to be the bond-slaves of Him Who redeemed us. (See also above, Chapter VIII, especially pp. 133, 134.)

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME OTHER THEORIES EXAMINED

THE theory of the Atonement which this book has been defending is that which we believe to be most in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament. It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss a few other theories, not in order to denounce or ridicule them, but rather to enquire from what source the great positive value which they all contain is derived, and then to consider whether they can be regarded as adequate in themselves.

### THE SUBJECTIVE THEORY

The subjective theory is that which makes the atoning value of Christ's death consist in *its effect on us* and not in any "objective" expiation for sin. According to it there is no problem of forgiveness on God's side. He is ready and eager to forgive as soon as we turn to Him. The one essential is that we should become forgivable—*i.e.*, that we should have a sincere sorrow for sin and a hearty desire to love and serve Him for the future. The place which the death of Christ has in atonement is simply that it is the most powerful means of winning our hearts to Him, because it is the supreme proof of His love for us.

Now there is a sense in which we can heartily admit that there is no problem of forgiveness on God's side. The Bible is full of invitations to the sinner, which make it clear that God is only waiting for him to turn to Him in true repentance and faith, and that He will then joyfully receive him. Every proclamation of the Gospel emphasizes the fact that God is eager to receive the repentant sinner, and that there is absolutely no obstacle on His side. But

we have attempted to show\* that *this is only true because the problem has been solved*. There has been a problem, but before the foundation of the world God devised its solution, and there is no problem to-day.

These remarks may be regarded as a mere juggling with words, but they have a very definite purpose. For the supporters of the subjective theory love to appeal to Bible passages which are at the very centre of the Gospel message, as though there were a contradiction between the free offer of salvation and the doctrine that God in Christ has paid the price which made it possible for that free offer to be made.

But the main purpose of this chapter is to consider the explanations which this and other theories offer of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross. Dean Rashdall† quotes a clear statement of the subjective explanation from Peter the Lombard, a theologian of the twelfth century. "So great a pledge of love having been given to us, we are both moved and kindled to love God Who did such great things for us; and by this we are justified, that is, being loosed from our sins we are made just. The death of Christ therefore justifies us, inasmuch as through it charity is stirred up in our hearts."

The definition of justification in this statement is open to serious criticism, but we do not wish to lay stress on this point, but rather on the positive truth that the love of God revealed by the Cross has indeed mighty power to win the heart of the sinner to Him, and so to bring about his salvation.‡ Assuredly this is true. Wherever Christ crucified is preached, it is in order that the love of God, displayed at

\* See Chapters I, III, and IV.

† *The Idea of Atonement*, p. 438.

‡ Yet it is necessary to observe that the recognition of the love of God sometimes *follows* salvation. Sometimes it is a strong conviction of sin and fear of judgment which drives the sinner to God, and it is only when he has found peace by accepting the Gospel message of forgiveness through the blood of Christ, that the glory of the love of God bursts upon his soul.

Calvary, may win the hearts of the hearers to repentance and faith. Paul himself preached Christ just for this purpose.

"We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him. And working together with him we intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. v. 20-vi. 1, R.V.

Surely the purpose of the statement in verse 21 was simply that "by so great a pledge of love" their hearts might be "moved and kindled to love God Who did such great things" for them.

But we ask, Why is the Cross a revelation of the love of God, and that of such mighty power that the most hardened and degraded have been melted by it? In the passage just quoted Paul gives a clear enough answer to this question, and there is no doubt about his meaning when he says,

"God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him." Rom. v. 8, 9, R.V.

But if the purpose of the Cross was *only* to be a proof of God's love to us, it is difficult to see what proof of love it would give, unless by Christ's death some real benefit was obtained for us, or some real disaster averted.

Dr. Dale\* and Dr. Denney† have both given clear and forcible expression to this argument. Dale takes the illustration of a man saving a child from a burning house at

\* *The Atonement*, Preface to Seventh Edition.

† *The Death of Christ*, pp. 126, 127.



the cost of his own life, which would surely be considered by the child and his parents a wonderful act of love. "But if there were no child in the house, and if I were told that he entered it and perished with no other object than to show his love for me, the explanation would be absolutely unintelligible." Denney's illustration is on exactly the same lines: it is that of a man who jumps into the sea to save another from drowning; or, on the other supposition, to show his love for someone who was in no danger.

Dean Rashdall\* has replied to this argument that the death of our Lord was not a sort of suicide, but was the act of the Jewish priests, the Roman magistrate and soldiers. In his view our Lord could have escaped His death by abandoning His work of preaching Divine truth, and of preparing the way for the Kingdom of God, and for our admission thereto. His death, then, was voluntary only in the sense that any martyr's death is voluntary, if he might have saved himself by silence or recanting. It has been, he says, more to Christendom than other martyrs' deaths, just because the Lord Himself was so much more than other martyrs, because His life was more than other lives. Our Lord's life was a life of loving service, and His willingness to persist even to the death was the supreme evidence of the love which His whole life declared. Dean Rashdall concludes: "There is nothing in the fact that the necessity for the death did not arise from any objective demand for expiation which can diminish the gratitude and the love which such a death, taken in connexion with such a life, was calculated to awaken towards the Sufferer."

The argument that our Lord's death was voluntary, only in the sense that to avoid it He must have been unfaithful to His mission, has already been answered in Chapter VI. It is unnecessary to repeat the evidence there set out, but this may be added, that there is not the least evidence that the idea of escaping death by silence or compromise ever even suggested itself to our Lord as a temptation to be

\* *Op. cit.*, pp. 440-443.



resisted: nor is there any suggestion that His enemies thought of trying to silence Him by threats of death. Contrast their treatment of His disciples (Acts iv. 18-22; v. 40). But there is definite evidence that He met and defeated the temptation to appeal to His Father for supernatural aid (Matt. xxvi. 53 compared with Mark xiv. 36). The death of One Who could at any moment have saved Himself by supernatural power was clearly voluntary in a much deeper sense than that of any other martyr. For He submitted voluntarily to a violence which could not have constrained Him without His own consent.

The all-important question is, Why did He so consent? Dean Rashdall's answer, "Because He could not do otherwise without unfaithfulness to His mission," is of course true, but not in the sense in which he means it—namely, that He could only have escaped by ceasing from His proclamation of the Gospel. According to His own repeated statements, He knew that His death was foretold in the Old Testament, and even before He had left Galilee He knew with certainty that His coming visit to Jerusalem for the Passover was God's appointed time (Luke xiii. 32, 33). See also His saying on the road to Jericho, recorded in Mark x. 33. Jerusalem had her "day," her "time of visitation" (Luke xix. 44), during which she had the opportunity of accepting the Messiah, and, before He had even entered the city for that last Passover, He knew that that "day" was nearly over. His submission was simply because He knew that it was in God's plan that He should die, and He knew that God's appointed time had come. "This is your hour," He said to those who seized Him, "your hour and the power of darkness." The appointed time had come, and the power of darkness was for a short while permitted to do its worst through those unhappy human beings who had yielded themselves up to be its instruments.

We saw also in Chapter VI that, even apart from the ransom passage (Mark x. 45), our Lord's constant reference

to prophecy as the explanation of the necessity of His death carries with it His approval of the expiatory teaching of Isa. liii and other Old Testament prophecies. So, then, His motive for submission to His enemies' power was not only the fact that the appointed time for His predicted death had come, but also the knowledge of the purpose for which He was to die.

However, it is desirable to give the fullest weight to the truth which the subjective theory contains. Although the evidence even of the first three Gospels cannot be harmonized with the view that our Lord's death was *only* a martyrdom, it assuredly was a martyrdom. The hatred of the priests was aroused against the Lord by His faithful and uncompromising proclamation of the truth, and Dean Rashdall is quite right in insisting that they were not mere puppets, but that their actions were as free as any human actions are, otherwise indeed they would not have been responsible for them. Let us then examine this aspect of His death.

The history of the Church has provided from its earliest days until now examples of martyrdom which move us deeply, especially when the opportunity is given to us to study something of the life-story of the martyr, and the death for Christ is seen to come as a fitting climax to a beautiful life lived for Him and for others. It is quite true that men and women have been led to Christ through reading such stories, for the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. It is certainly also true that the story of Calvary has a marvellous power to draw the heart of the reader or hearer of it to the Sufferer, even when the fuller meaning of His death is not understood or is questioned. And as the effect of a martyr's death is greatly increased if the reader knows something of the life-story behind it, so the martyr-death of the Lord Jesus comes as the climax of a perfect life of self-sacrificing service of God and man. We hear Him, Who told us to forgive unto seventy times seven, praying for His murderers: we reflect that the hands which

were pierced by the nails were the same which had blessed the little children and healed the sick. As a supreme example of self-sacrifice, the Cross is simply the climax of the life which had preceded it. In the New Testament our Lord's martyr-death is set out as an example to His followers (*e.g.*, 1 Pet. ii. 21-24), and just as we rejoice in the martyr's readiness to suffer all things for Christ's sake, so we are shown the Lord Himself giving His life as an act of perfect obedience to His Father. "I come . . . to do thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7). He Himself said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. ii. 10), and in like manner we read of Himself that He "became obedient even as far as death, yea the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 8, Greek).

All this is true, and we do not mind how emphatically its truth is stated. But as a complete explanation of the Cross it is wholly insufficient. For it is not this aspect of our Lord's death which leads us to Him *as Saviour*. Think of other martyrdoms. Suppose a man has been led to Christ through reading of the heroic life and death of John and Bertie Stam.\* Can it be imagined that he would regard them as his saviours, or say "They died for me"? It might indeed be said that they died for China in a certain sense, but hardly for every individual Chinese, and certainly not for the Indians and the Japanese. As long as our Lord's life is considered simply as a martyr-death crowning a life of self-sacrifice, we have to remember that His ministry on earth was very limited in its sphere. His message was delivered to the Jewish people alone, and He Himself expressly said that He was sent only to them (Matt. x. 6; xv. 24): it could be said, therefore, that as martyr He died for them. But it is only in a very extended sense, if at all, that He could be said *as martyr* to have died for us who read the story of His life and death after 1900 years. A martyr's death inspires us as an uplifting example, and especially as a testimony of what God can

\* Martyred in Anhwei Province, China, in December, 1934.

do in a life yielded to Him. But it cannot establish a claim on our gratitude as something done *for us*, except perhaps to a limited extent in the case of those who came under the martyr's direct influence in his lifetime.

So, then, if we can see in our Lord's death only the supreme example of a martyr's heroic death, our love and homage may be won by the surpassing moral beauty of what He was and did, but *so far* there is nothing to make us cry, "My Saviour," or, "It was for me He hung and suffered there." If anyone can really from the heart say "My Saviour" to Jesus Christ, then, whatever theory of the atonement his reason may accept, his heart-faith bears witness to the truth that there is something much more than a martyrdom in that death on Calvary.

Moreover, so long as we think of our Lord's death as a martyrdom we tend to concentrate our thoughts on the physical sufferings. The mental sufferings portrayed in the story of Gethsemane, and even more in the cry of desertion on the Cross, would be difficulties rather than helps to our devotion, for many other martyrs have faced death with far greater serenity of mind.

In fact, the power of the story of the Cross to win men, nay, even to be an example of self-sacrifice, depends to a very great degree on the doctrine of substitution which the subjective theory rejects. Let us illustrate from two of the earliest preachers of the Gospel. We have seen already that one of Paul's strongest statements about the Cross, "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf," is set in the midst of an impassioned appeal to sinners to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. v. 20-vi. 1).

So also when Peter is urging his readers to endure persecution with patience and courage, he appeals to the supreme example of Jesus Christ.

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth . . . when he



suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. ii. 21-23.

For the purpose of his immediate argument it might seem that Peter need have gone no further. But he knew that the power of that Example upon his readers would be infinitely increased by the thought that His sufferings were not only undeserved, but were in the place of what *they* deserved, and that by those sufferings they were healed. How can I hold back from following Him when what He bore was for me? And so Peter continues:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."  
1 Pet. ii. 24.

So, then, there is no dispute about the effect of the story of the Cross upon the hearts and wills of men: from the days of the Apostles that story has been the most powerful element in Christian preaching. But in order that there may be that personal recognition of the Lord as one's own Saviour which alone avails to melt the heart and turn it to God, there must be *at least* a recognition that, in some sense, His death was a purposeful act intended to secure our salvation as individuals, and not as a race. It may be frankly admitted that there are theories which satisfy this minimum condition and yet reject the full doctrine of substitution. But we would not claim that this particular line of argument is sufficient by itself to prove this doctrine and rule out all others: what we do claim is that it shows the insufficiency of any subjective theory which makes the atoning value of the death of Christ consist solely in its effect on us.

#### THEORIES NOT PURELY SUBJECTIVE

Dr. Maltby, in *The Meaning of the Cross*, has a remarkable theory of the sense in which our Lord bore our sins.



When those to whom He was sent rejected His message and ungratefully spurned His love, He bore their ingratitude and continued to love them. He bore the anguish of seeing them refuse to give up their sin and only hate Him the more for warning them against it. He continued to love them in spite of everything, until their hatred so increased that His own death became inevitable, and still He continued to love them and to persevere with His attempts to win them. "When, at the end, men showed that there was no magnanimity they would not abuse, no advantage they would not seize, no treachery they would not employ—all this was the last challenge of sin. He had to answer whether He had gone far enough, whether He would wash His hands of those who repudiated Him, or whether He would cast in His lot with them and reaffirm the love that will not let us go. Perhaps His answer was given finally in Gethsemane."\* Dr. Maltby also suggests that our Lord looked forward to continuing after death His patient endurance of human ingratitude and sin, while never ceasing to love, and seeking to win, the sinner. "We see the meaning of the Cross when we see it as the act and deed of Christ . . . when for love's sake He burdened Himself with the whole situation which our sin had created, embraced the prospect of endless sacrifice, and dedicated Himself without reserve, in face of all that sin could make of us, to the task of our recovery to God and all goodness. . . . If to bear sins means to go where the sinner is, and refuse either to leave him or to compromise with him; to love a shameful being, and therefore to be pierced by his shame; to devote oneself utterly to his recovery, and follow him with ceaseless ministries, knowing that he cannot be recovered without his consent, and that his consent may be indefinitely withheld—if this is to bear sin, then this is what Jesus did upon the cross, and it is the innermost secret of the heart of God."†

Here again there are elements of truth. The ingratitude

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

and hatred of the Jews must have caused our Lord the deepest grief: His two laments over Jerusalem bear witness to this (Luke xiii. 34; xix. 41, 42). It is also perfectly true that He was the Friend of the outcast and degraded: indeed He found many of them more willing recipients of His message than the respectable and outwardly religious. It is also true that even with those who persisted in rejecting His message He was patient and long-suffering, and that on the Cross He prayed for His murderers. It is also gloriously true that in our own day, as in the days of His earthly ministry, the patience of God, both with those who reject His love and with those who accept it and then let Him down, is amazing. "Despisest thou," says Paul, "the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. ii. 4).

But our Lord's teaching will be searched in vain for one saying which in any way suggests that God's method in dealing with the rejecter of His mercy is "to follow him with ceaseless ministries, knowing that he cannot be recovered without his consent, and that his consent may be *indefinitely* withheld," if the words "ceaseless" and "indefinite" are to be given their full meaning. There is much in His teaching which most plainly suggests that the sinner cannot *indefinitely* withhold his consent and then at his own convenient time turn to God. He taught, on the other hand, as was made clear in Chapter I,\* that there is a day of opportunity within which, indeed, the Divine patience waits and the Divine love pleads, but that, if that day is allowed to go by, God does *not* follow the scorner of His patience with "ceaseless ministries," but deals with him in terrible judgment. (See Luke xiii. 24-27; Matt. xxv. 1-12; Luke xiii. 8, 9; xix. 41-44.)

At first sight this may seem strange. What! Does our Lord really teach that in God's dealings with the sinner there is something which falls below human love and

\* See especially p. 36 above.

patience at its best? Must there not be something very wrong with an argument which produces such a result? In reply we would say first, "Read His words." No amount of reasoning as to what His teaching *ought* to be can outweigh the actual fact of what it *is*. But, secondly, the difficulty arises from assuming (as Dr. Maltby does assume)\* that God's relations to us are *only* personal, such as those between a father and a disobedient child. Our Lord's attitude to an injury to Himself is very plainly shown in His answer to the disciples when they desired Him to call down fire on a Samaritan village which refused to receive Him (Luke ix. 51-56), and above all in His prayer for those who were crucifying Him. But nothing could more plainly show that the relations between God and man are *not* merely personal than the fact that He Who so strongly insisted on the necessity of our forgiving one another up to seventy times seven yet distinctly taught that God has appointed a day of grace after which the door will be shut, and the Master of the house will say, "Verily I say unto you, I never knew you." (See also Appendix C on "The Category of Law," where this question of personal relations between God and man is more fully discussed.)

Thus, when Dr. Maltby's theory is measured against our Lord's own teaching, there is one very fundamental flaw in it—namely, that He does not teach that God deals with man in the manner in which, according to Dr. Maltby, He ought to do. But, further than this, though it is true that Christ's redeemed ones can never weary of marvelling at the amazing patience with which God has borne with them, yet there is no suggestion either in the words of the Lord Himself, or anywhere else in the New Testament, that this patient endurance of our rebellion is a means of actually taking away our sin. Leading to repentance (Rom. ii. 4) is not the same as taking away sin. Is it likely that if Dr. Maltby's explanation of the Cross were the true one,

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

no express assertion of it should have been made for nearly nineteen centuries after our Lord's death? And the explanation is associated with a reading of the history of His life on earth and the events leading to His death, which we have already seen in Chapter VI to be irreconcilable with the plain statements of the Gospels, even if John be left out.

Again, there are theories which admit that our Lord did really offer Himself for men, but assert that that self-offering was not limited to the Cross but consisted of His Incarnation and of His whole life of perfect obedience to God and service of man, culminating in the supreme obedience "even as far as death, yea, the death of the cross."

There is surely truth in this presentation. We all recognize that the self-offering of the Son of God began when He left His Father's throne, and took upon Him "the form of a bond-servant." In one sense the Incarnation and the Atonement are one perfect whole. As a hymn has it—

"He came from the mansions of glory,  
His blood for my ransom He shed."

Because the Incarnation was the indispensable condition before there could be an atoning sacrifice, it is possible for the strongest believer in that sacrifice to say, "He came from heaven to save me from my sins," or, as Paul actually did say,

"Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."  
2 Cor. viii. 9.

There can be no dispute so far. But the real question is, What is it which actually takes away our sins? A hymn returns the confident answer, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus," and we can safely challenge the world to produce any evidence that the hymn, in this answer, is misrepresent-



ing New Testament teaching. In all the ingenious arguments which have been written to show that the Atonement was effected by the whole work of Christ from the Incarnation onwards, there is no evidence produced from the explicit statements of the New Testament. The most that can be done is either to appeal to texts like 2 Cor. viii. 9, which say no more than any believer in substitutionary atonement would immediately grant; or to draw elaborate inferences from passages which in themselves say nothing about atonement. For instance, the fact that our Lord submitted to baptism, the ordinance of repentance, is claimed as evidence that He was then making a representative act of repentance, and that His atoning work was "a representative fulfilment of man's obligations" of which the Cross was only the culmination.\* But no attempt is made to claim explicit New Testament support for this theory!

In the New Testament the actual taking away of sin is nowhere referred to anything other than the death of Christ. The resurrection, it is true, is linked as being inseparable from it, but even the resurrection is not spoken of as the means whereby our Lord became a propitiation for our sins. If it be true that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sins, it is impossible to regard any other part of our Lord's work as directly effective in taking away sin. Of course, if, on other grounds, we have decided that there was no need of any *expiation* for sin, it is natural enough that we should put as much emphasis as possible on parts of our Lord's work which could not be expiatory, such as the Incarnation and His ministry on earth. But it ought to be clearly recognized that, so far as concerns the taking away of sin, we are definitely parting company with the New Testament the moment we attribute atoning value to anything other than the death of Christ.

As has already been remarked in Chapter VIII, a plausible

\* *The Atonement in History and in Life*, pp. 126, 127.



ible argument can be produced for the proposition that the whole life and work of Christ, the coming of the Spirit and the founding of the Christian Church are all part of the means of our redemption. So they are, if "redemption" is taken to mean, in the wide sense which it sometimes has in Scripture, a process which is only completed after this life. But in *that* sense redemption is not the equivalent of reconciliation or atonement, which the New Testament presents to us as a fact accomplished once for all upon the Cross.

It will be seen that we are as far as possible from denouncing as false these theories of the Atonement which we have been criticizing. On the contrary, nearly all their positive statements are true: but all the truth contained in them is included in the full Bible doctrine of the Atonement, as the part is included in the whole. And much of the truth in those theories—for example, the truth that the Cross saves us through winning our love to the Saviour, is really only true because what the theory denies is also true—namely, that the love which wins us is that One Who was condemned in our place, and sealed our pardon with His blood.

Lastly, all these theories which fall short of Substitution seem to be liable to one of two objections. Either they find the atoning value of the Cross in its effect on us, not in anything done by Christ apart from us: or, they admit that in *some* sense the Cross accomplished something necessary for our forgiveness, but protest warmly against "penal" and "substitutionary" theories. In the first case the theory may be simply expressed, but it is unsatisfying, for it fails to show adequate reason why the effect should be produced. "He died for me, that His love might win me to God" is a simple statement full of beautiful meaning, *if* there lies behind it the belief that His death really took my sin away. But when that belief is ruled out, the statement fails to carry conviction.

In the second case the doctrine becomes complicated and

very hard to follow. The Gospel as preached in the New Testament is simple; it can be expressed in language which goes straight to the heart of the poor, the ignorant, and the depraved. But these modern "re-interpretations" of it are for the educated and the thinker alone. As we read them, we wonder what "gospel to the poor" could possibly be based upon them. Such a gospel must either be too complicated and abstruse to come with power and storm the hearts of men; or, if it is made both simple and definite, most people would fail to distinguish it from the very doctrine against which it protests.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

HITHERTO we have been mainly on the defensive: but there is more to be said for this great doctrine than merely to reply to objections against it, and show the inadequacy of alternatives.

“Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood:  
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!”

We have seen in Chapters IV-VI that the doctrine faithfully expressed in these lines is the teaching of the New Testament. For ourselves this alone is ample vindication of the doctrine. But we would ask even those who would not at all share our view of the authority of the Bible to pause and consider whether its witness to this doctrine has not far more weight than they may have hitherto recognized.

If man needs to be saved, and if salvation is the work of God, surely, in the nature of things, it is from God that man must learn about it. If, then, we believe that God has revealed Himself in the New Testament at all, it is just exactly the means of our salvation which He would most desire to make clear to us. Now we have seen that the witness of the New Testament as to the importance and the meaning of the death of Christ is clear and consistent: and the doctrine of substitution agrees with that witness and is entirely derived from it. Alternative theories, on the other hand, have their real basis in reasonings independent of the New Testament, or at least independent of anything it has to say about the death of

Christ. These theories either frankly abandon any attempt to base themselves on the New Testament, or endeavour (unsuccessfully, as we have sought to show) to interpret it in support of conclusions arrived at on other grounds, such as the analogy between God and an ideal human father. But though men may question whether the Bible is the Word of God, it can hardly be denied that for eighteen hundred years it has had just that power over the hearts of men which the Word of God might be expected to have. Would it not be rather strange if the true explanation of the greatest of God's acts were to be found in human reasonings independent of that Book?

Is it not a deeply significant fact that the very Book which contains the doctrine of redemption by the blood of the Lamb tells us very plainly that the doctrine of the Cross is an offence to the natural man?

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 22-24.

It is true that the ground of objection to Paul's doctrine of the Cross is different to-day from what it was when that doctrine was first preached; but the difference is more apparent than real. *Then* the Jews stumbled at the notion of a crucified Messiah, as a blasphemy: and the Greeks scorned the folly of the idea that One Who died a felon's death could be the Saviour of the world. *Now* the "blasphemy" is to say that the God of Love could require an atonement by blood, and the "folly" is to believe that a Substitute's death could take away our guilt before God. But still the two objections stand, blasphemy and folly. Oh, may those who turn away with abhorrence from the blood of Christ think again, and yet again, whether they



are not providing in their own persons a proof that the Book which they reject is true. That Book saw men reject the full doctrine of the Cross as weak and foolish, and its comments stand to-day.

"The word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God. . . . The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. i. 18, 25, R.V.

Any doctrine which really comes from God will always bear on its face this mark of His authorship, that it exalts Him and abases man's pride.

"Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 3, R.V.

The full Bible doctrine of the Cross perfectly answers to this test. If I believe that Jesus died in my stead, then I see in His Cross the condemnation of my sin, and I must acknowledge that I fully deserve the punishment from which He saved me. It is as a sinner deserving of God's utmost judgment that I must sue for mercy.

Nor is this all. When I sue for mercy, though I must be repentant (else I could not honestly ask for forgiveness at all), I dare not plead my repentance as a ground of forgiveness. My repentance by itself is only my honest desire for salvation, my faith is only the empty hand which the beggar stretches out for alms: what I plead before the Throne is nothing of my own, but altogether what my Saviour has suffered in my stead and on my behalf.

There are those who reject salvation through the death of Christ because they consider that their repentance and faith give them a claim on the God of Love to forgive them: He, they think, could do no other. Man would fain come to God standing upright, pleading his own re-



pentance, and claiming forgiveness as a right. But he must learn to fall on his face, own his nothingness, and plead the sacrifice of his Saviour.

But it is claimed that the more noble and beautiful idea of God is that which represents Him as ready and eager to forgive on the sole ground of repentance: *not* because an atonement has been made, but because there is no need of an atonement for any other purpose than to win men to repentance. It is argued that the love of God blots out past sin, as a matter of course, as soon as the present disposition of the heart becomes right. Is this idea of God really noble and beautiful? We challenge the claim.

The brilliance of modern civilization, the widespread benefits of education, depriving an ever increasing number of the excuse of not knowing what is right, nay, even the noble examples of heroism and self-sacrifice which show that man has something left of the image of God—all these things do but throw into blacker relief the hideous corruption of man's nature and the awful havoc wrought by sin. On the large scale, we have seen civilization itself brought to the edge of the abyss, because men have educated whole nations to think in terms of war and have sought to gain their ends thereby. On a smaller scale, it is well known that a very large part of the appalling mass of pain and misery resulting, for example, from road accidents is due to selfish indifference to the rights and safety of others. The records of the law courts, the notebooks and memories of social workers of all kinds, are stored with pitiful examples of human lives wrecked by cruelty, lust and greed. The great vested interests of drink and gambling flourish and do their devilish work, too deeply rooted in the fundamental instincts of human nature for any Government to deal with them according to their deserts.

These things are the normal fruits of the corruption of the human heart, and when men cry out against God for allowing them, they forget that a world in which sin was protected from its consequences would be not better, but

far worse, than that in which we live. But though God permits sin to work out ruin after its kind, He is not indifferent to it. If we, when we see the consequences of this moral leprosy, shudder at the sight, with what infinite repulsion must the Holy One look on the disease itself, of which earth's misery is but the symptom!

God is not to be compared to a private individual: He is the moral Ruler of the universe, the very source of right as opposed to wrong. How then can He pass over this foul thing which insults His majesty, defiles His fair creation, and bears fruit, even in this life, in misery and anguish, the wail of which continually rises before Him? Think again! Is that really a noble idea which represents Him as satisfied to put sin away on the sole ground of the sinner's repentance and faith?

True, it would be useless to ask more of the sinner. What more could he give? If it is incredible that the Holy One could lightly pass over sin, it is, if possible, yet more incredible that the sin-stained one could remove his own pollution from himself by any act of his own: he can at best only desire better things, and trust in Another, Who must save him, if he is to be saved at all. *God* must save; it is *His* problem. He Who loathes sin must free the sinner from it, or it will for ever remain. How can He do it? Is it really noble or beautiful to say that He does it on the sole ground of what the sinner himself has done, *his* repentance and faith?

How much more beautiful, how much more worthy of the love, the holiness and the wisdom of God, is the Bible's solution of the problem! The ground of forgiveness must express God's uttermost abhorrence of sin, so that in the very act of redemption He most completely condemns the foul sin from which He saves. God must pay the whole cost of man's forgiveness, because man cannot pay one atom of it himself. The Love of God was equal to the need! The Divine Son, One of the three Persons of the One God, He through Whom, from the beginning of the

Creation, the Father has revealed Himself to man (John i. 18), took man's nature upon Him, and so became our Representative. He offered Himself as a sacrifice in our stead, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree. He suffered, not only awful physical anguish, but also the unthinkable spiritual horror of becoming identified with the sin to which He was infinitely opposed. He thereby came under the curse of sin, so that for a time even His perfect fellowship with His Father was broken. Thus God proclaimed His infinite abhorrence of sin by being willing Himself to suffer all that, in place of the guilty ones, in order that He might justly forgive. Thus the Love of God found its perfect fulfilment, because He did not hold back from even that uttermost sacrifice, in order that we might be saved from eternal death through what He endured. Thus it was possible for Him to be just, and to justify the believer, because as Lawgiver and as Substitute for the rebel race of man, He Himself had suffered the penalty of the broken Law.

"The Love of Christ grips us," cried Paul; "because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all have died"\* in Him, their Representative and Substitute. May God grant to these pages a share in helping some, who have hitherto found only difficulties and stumblingblocks in the glorious gospel of our salvation, to let themselves be *gripped* by the love of God in Christ, till all difficulties and objections melt away in the glory of the Cross, as the morning mist before the sun in his strength.

\* 2 Cor. v. 14, Greek.

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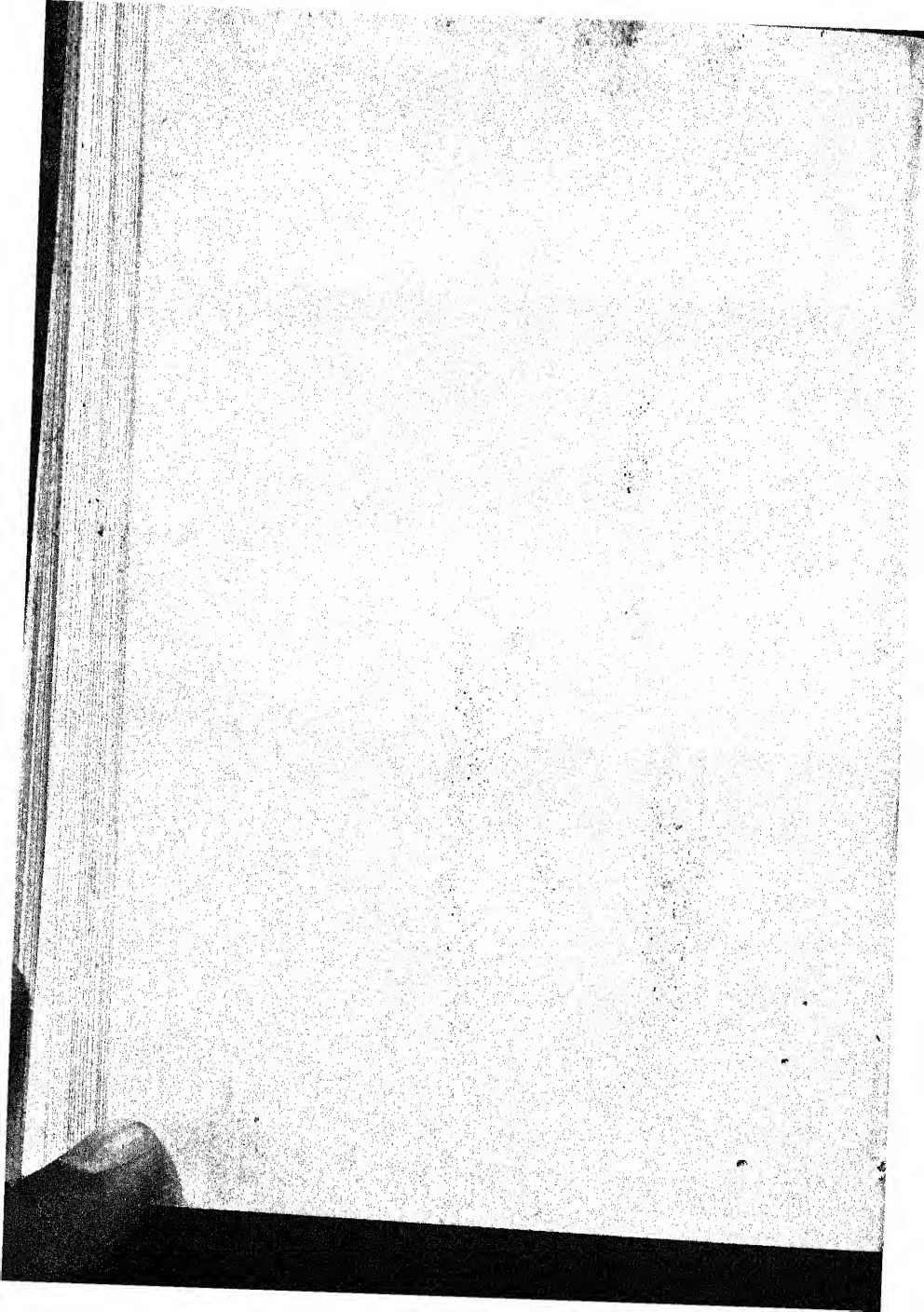


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\* 2 Cor. v. 14, Greek.





## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### PUNISHMENT INFLICTED BY LOVE

THE New Testament does not ignore the truth that Love must punish sin: only it does not state this as the whole truth about punishment. The words quoted from *Liberal Evangelicalism*, on p. 33 of this book, find a fairly close parallel in Heb. xii. 5-11, which should be carefully studied. A few sentences will show the drift of the writer's thought.

"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? . . . They verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Heb. xii. 7, 10, 11.

But no reader of the Epistle to the Hebrews as a whole could possibly imagine for one moment that the writer intended to say that this is the only way in which God deals with human sin! The context shows as clearly as can be that he is referring to the chastisement of God's own children—that is, to those who have become His "by adoption and grace." The argument from the "ideal human father" applies to God's relations with those whom He acknowledges as His children, but to none other. And even then they have need to beware how they presume on His Love.

We touch here on one of the thorniest questions in Bible

theology: can a true child of God finally fall away? Without expressing an opinion on this point, it can be said that the New Testament issues clear warnings to those who would presume on the love and patience of God, or, having known at least something of His redeeming grace, would turn their backs upon it, and choose the service of sin. Two such warnings are found in the Epistle to the Hebrews itself (Heb. vi. 4-8; x. 26-31). Whether or no such persons were ever truly in the relation of children to God, the Bible certainly does not refer to them as being in that relation after their apostasy. It does say that there will be those who will claim it, and be told, "I never knew you" (Matt. vii. 22, 23; Luke xii. 9; xiii. 25-28). There is an awful difference between the language used in Heb. xii. 5-11, where the punishments inflicted by Love are really spoken of, and that used by the same and other writers in referring to the judgment on those who reject, or "fall away" from, the grace of God.

## APPENDIX B

### THE INTERPRETATION OF PARABLES

PARABLES have suffered in two ways from their interpreters. Some interpreters insist on finding a spiritual meaning for every detail, regardless of whether or no there is any connection with the main purpose of the parable, even though sometimes the results so obtained are at variance with explicit teaching elsewhere. An attempt has been made in Chapter II to show the fallacy, and indeed the danger, of this kind of interpretation. But there is an opposite error which is almost equally harmful. It is to press to unwarrantable lengths the sound principle of concentrating attention on the main point of the parable, to the extent of denying that anything in a parable has any relevance at all except its main purpose.

Now we must distinguish between two quite different things: the parable as a story and the parable in its application. When we are thinking of the application, we do well to concentrate attention on the main purpose of the parable, and interpret details in strict regard to their bearing on that purpose, being particularly careful not to base any doctrine on the sole support of our interpretation of a detail in a parable. But when we are thinking of the parable as a story, we have a right to expect that every detail in the story shall be relevant and true to life, in the sense of being possible and in agreement with human nature and the facts of life. Where our Lord's parables are taken from human life or the facts of Nature, we all know that they answer perfectly to this test. Why, then, when we come to a parable drawn from the Unseen World, are we to say that it is no evidence as to what takes place there, because it is a parable?

For example, the Parable of Dives and Lazarus is an

imaginary story, if you will, but imaginary in the same sense as the Parable of the Sower is imaginary. We are not bound to believe that there was actually a poor man named Lazarus, who lay at a rich man's gate, and that the other events of the parable actually happened to this man and his rich neighbour. It may indeed have been so: some think that the naming of Lazarus implies that he was a real character. But there is room for legitimate difference of opinion on this point between people who have an equal reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ and His teaching: and in no case could it fairly be contended that His authority is in any way committed either way. It is also quite true that this story of the Unseen World was not primarily intended to teach us about the future life, any more than the Parable of the Sower was intended to teach us about agriculture.

We know, however, that the Parable of the Sower is perfectly true to life, that seed sown on the road-side is picked up by birds, that seed sown among thorns is choked in its growth, and so on: and it would be a grievous blemish in the parable were it otherwise. In like manner we know that the Parable of the Prodigal Son is true to the facts of human nature and the possibilities of human life; we know that there is no reason why a real father and his sons should not have acted in exactly the manner in which the parable says; we know that there are such creatures as pigs, and that a starving man might desire to eat their food, and so on. Were it not so, where would be the value of the parable? Even so, we may be quite sure that He who is the Truth would not tell us a story of the Unseen World which is at variance with the facts of that world: and we are fully justified in assuming an equal truthfulness to life in every detail of the story of Dives and Lazarus, as we know to be the case in the stories of the Prodigal Son or the Sower.

Above all, it is impossible to say that our Lord took over from Jewish sources the imagery of the Unseen World



which He embodied in that parable, and that—because it was only a parable—He Himself assumed no responsibility for it. Even those who do not accept the view that the scenery of that other world lay as open to His gaze as the scenery of this world, must recognize that He would never say anything, even in a parable, which He Himself did not consider to be in full harmony with the character of His Father.

## APPENDIX C

### THE CATEGORY OF LAW

At the present time there is a strong reaction against the use of legal terms in reference to the relations between God and man, and especially in the theory of the Atonement. It is hotly denied that there is anything legal in the problem of forgiveness: God's relations to the sinner, it is said, are purely personal, such as exist between a father and a disobedient child. The mention of such a phrase as "the holy law of God," or "God must be just," provokes in many people an instant reaction of disgust and antagonism. To label a theory of the Atonement "juridical" is to pronounce its condemnation.

It must be admitted that some provocation has been given for this attitude by the formation of theories of the Atonement which were so intensely legal as to become mechanical and unspiritual. We have no desire to defend a statement which fails to rise above the terminology and the range of ideas of a human legal code. The Law of God is the expression of His Holiness, both positively in commanding good and negatively in forbidding and rejecting evil. To say that He "must be just" is not to say that He is bound by an exactly formulated legal system like a magnified earthly code of law, but that by the necessities of His own nature He must be true to His own righteousness, and cannot compromise with sin.

Before the category of law in this sense can be dismissed from our consideration of the Atonement, there are some questions that must be answered. Is there an absolute distinction between right and wrong? Surely there is. But, if so, does not God supremely represent right as against wrong? Can sin be regarded as *only* a personal injury

against God of the same kind (however greater in degree) as a personal wrong inflicted by one man on another?

See by all means what Dr. Carnegie Simpson has written on this subject in *The Fact of Christ*.<sup>\*</sup> We are private individuals, and forgive one another as such: we are bound to do so, because we have been forgiven a debt in comparison with which offences between man and man are trifles. But "if our forgiveness would have social or public effects endangering moral order in the community, then it may be impossible" (*i.e.*, forgiveness expressed in action, as distinct from attitude of mind). "Now Almighty God is not a magnified private individual, He is the very source and centre of the ethical order of the universe, and it does depend on Him."<sup>†</sup> Eternal Law is not indeed a separate entity independent of God which even He must observe—we need to be very careful to avoid using language which implies such a heathen conception—it is rather the very being of the holy God, as the moral Ruler of the universe. An earthly judge cannot "forgive" a grave offence, because by so doing he would not only be false to his oath, but would endanger the foundations of public order.

"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord." Prov. xvii. 15.

God had to find a way whereby *He* might forgive without being false to His own eternal righteousness, which is the ethical order of the universe. A theory which eliminates the category of law from the process of reconciliation does treat God as a "magnified private individual," which He is not and cannot be. In the New Testament teaching about sin and about atonement, "law" and "judgment" are very important words; and the foregoing consideration may help to show that this fact cannot be lightly dismissed,

<sup>\*</sup> Expositor's Library Edition, pp. 140-144.

<sup>†</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

as though the legal language were only the outer form of an essentially different truth.

Attempts have been made, indeed, to show that Paul (of all men) eliminated the category of law in his teaching about the Atonement. "The weakness of all these well-meant attempts to justify the ways of God to man is that they all try to find room for the atonement in the world of law, and inside its categories, in spite of the plain teaching of St. Paul that it cannot be done. That which the law could not do . . . God did."\* This is a strange interpretation of Rom. viii. 3, only made possible by the omission of the greater part of the verse: but happily the writer himself proceeded to supply a complete refutation of his own amazing statement about St. Paul's teaching. "The end of the law for the sinner is condemnation; the only hope for him is that he should escape out of the world of law into another world which is governed by quite other principles. 'Ye are not under the law but under grace.' The only way out of the world of law is by death, *in which all obligations to it* are discharged. Therefore Christ took upon Him the curse and condemnation of the law, and by death broke free from its world into the victory and liberty of the world of the Spirit. For us, too, escape is only possible by a real death, the death to sin which takes place in our identification with Christ through faith." Exactly so. This is just what Paul does teach: but what now becomes of the statement that room cannot be found for the atonement inside the categories of law? As Mr. Neill himself has said, the believer's escape from the dominion of law† is only made

\* Rev. S. C. Neill, *Report of Islington Clerical Conference*, 1934.

† The fact that the believer is free from law suggests another consideration. He who receives Jesus as Saviour becomes a child of God: but the relation of child to Father is personal not legal. Thus the Cross does effect for the believer what the "liberal" thinker mistakenly claims should be true for all, believers or not. It gives him a personal, in place of a legal, relationship with God, grace instead of law.

possible because God in Christ has fulfilled its utmost claims on the Cross, and the believer has been "united with him in his death" (see Rom. vii. 1-6). The law, in the sense of the eternal necessity that God must be just, was supremely vindicated by the Cross (Rom. iii. 25, 26, 31).

It is just because of that vindication that the deliverance of the believer from the claims of law can be so thorough. Paul in one place actually speaks of the law itself as nailed to the Cross (Col. ii. 14), the law in its aspect as man's enemy and accuser, making unfulfillable demands upon him, and condemning him for failure to fulfil them. The law cannot tyrannize over me, cannot accuse me, cannot condemn me, not because it has now been revealed that God is indifferent to law, but because my Saviour has died, and I have died in Him, and so God can be just and justify me. This, at any rate, is what the New Testament teaches. If its authority be set aside, that is another matter: but we are entitled to protest strongly against any attempt to claim that authority for eliminating law from the doctrine of the Atonement.



## APPENDIX D

### "TRADITIONAL FORMULÆ"?

IN the *Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, Lecture III, the late Dean Hastings Rashdall has given an interpretation of New Testament teaching on the death of Christ so fundamentally different from our own that it has seemed necessary to examine some of his more important statements in the following Note. In the Lecture referred to, Dr. Rashdall is not concerned with Paul or with the teaching of our Lord Himself, which he discusses in other Lectures, but with the rest of the New Testament, and also with the Fathers up to the time of Irenæus. In this Note we shall not go outside the New Testament, which is the less necessary as Dr. Rashdall expressly asserts that all his general statements apply as much to it as to the earliest Fathers.

He begins by making three general statements.

(1) The New Testament\* writers never wrote of the death of Christ as a substituted punishment or expiatory sacrifice, except either in direct quotations from the Old Testament or in "traditional formulæ" based on prophecy.

(2) These formulæ were commonly given without explanation, but where an explanation is given it is invariably of "an ethical or spiritual kind," which, for Dr. Rashdall, means suggesting moral effects on the sinner and not expiation or substitution. Thus, where the formula seems to speak of some act of vicarious atonement, the explanation refers only to some moral effect produced by the death of Christ on the believer. The suggestion is that the New Testament writers never really understood the meaning of

\* Throughout this Appendix, "New Testament" must be understood as "New Testament other than Paul's Epistles."

their own words when they wrote of Christ's death as a substitutionary atonement. They were merely repeating mechanically what they had been taught by tradition and prophecy, and their real belief was something different.\*

(3) Paul's theories of atonement and justification exercised almost no influence on later writers, either within or without the New Testament, for nearly a century after his death.

The truth of the last assertion partly depends on that of the other two, and partly is beside the mark, as regards the New Testament writers. We should never assert that these writers *derived their teaching* from Paul, but only that it is in harmony with his, which is not at all the same thing.

As for the first assertion, it must surely be felt that there is at least a considerable initial improbability, to say no more, against the view that even uninspired writers should use such language as, for example, that of 1 Pet. ii. 24 without appreciating its meaning. The principle does, however, enable Dr. Rashdall to eliminate the passages which most obviously disagree with his views by the simple process of labelling them as "traditional formulæ"!

The second assertion—that wherever the New Testament writers explain the "traditional formulæ" it is always in some sense that has nothing to do with substitution—is best tested by examining some typical examples. We propose to begin with some examples from 1 Peter, and then to take some further illustrations from the Fourth Gospel and the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious

\* In one place (p. 148) Dr. Rashdall admits that the formulæ would never have been accepted on the basis of mere authority, unless they had seemed to be confirmed by the spiritual experience of believers: but he withdraws his concession as soon as it is made. It appears that the New Testament writers misunderstood their own experience!

blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, R.V.

Dr. Rashdall comments: "It was not from the guilt of past sins, or the punishment that was their due, that his hearers were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, but from a vain manner of life." Is there any incompatibility between being redeemed from the guilt of past sins and being redeemed from an evil life? The context, which is an exhortation to holiness, requires the reference to deliverance from the power of sin: the cleansing from guilt is sufficiently indicated by the words, "the precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." As every Jew knew, lambs were sacrificed in order to take away the guilt of past sin. What Peter says here could be said by the most ardent believer in substitutionary atonement, and (if he is a preacher of the Gospel) frequently is said. Paul certainly used the atoning death of Christ as a call to holiness in exactly the same way as Peter does here:

"Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body." 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, R.V.

Again, Dr. Rashdall quotes 1 Pet. iii. 18, R.V.

"Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God."

His comment is: "Christ suffered, not to cancel the guilt, but to bring us to God." Again, where is the incompatibility between the two things? If we say that He suffered to bring us to God by cancelling the guilt which was the great barrier between us and Him, are we adding anything to what Peter implied? True, he did not actually put it in those words, but he implied it plainly enough. The words "suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous" are a clear assertion of vicarious punishment, especially

when taken together with the still clearer language of ii. 24, and the primary purpose of such suffering is the removal of guilt from those for whom the Substitute suffers. Dr. Rashdall's argument would only have force if there were something incompatible between removing our guilt and bringing us to God, which could hardly be maintained.

On 1 Pet. ii. 24 itself Dr. Rashdall remarks that "the references to Christ's sufferings are usually introduced by way of example: it is as an example that he quotes the passage of Isaiah about the sufferings of Jesus (ii. 24). His readers are told that they are partakers in those sufferings (iv. 13), as they could not well be if the writer thought of them as constituting a unique expiatory sacrifice." It is quite true that Peter usually introduces his references to Christ's death by way of example. The main purpose of his Epistle was to encourage his readers to suffer persecution patiently, while giving no just cause for it by their own conduct. But no one would deny that the sufferings of Christ include much in which we can and must follow Him, as the need arises. The less is included in the greater. If Christ died in my stead, if He underwent that awful agony of body, soul and spirit to save me from eternal death, dare I hesitate, if called upon, to bear suffering or even death for Him? Would it not be an unspeakable comfort to me to know that I was having a share, however small, in the sufferings of my Saviour? The fact that He bore infinitely more for me than I could ever bear for Him is only all the stronger reason why I should be willing to take such small part in His sufferings as I may be asked to take.

Peter tells his readers that Christ died for them, leaving them an example that they should follow in His steps (ii. 21). What example? Not, of course, the atoning aspect of His sufferings, but the fact that He did no sin to deserve them, and that He bore them with perfect patience (ii. 22, 23). But having said this, Peter goes further, in verse 24, to speak of the atoning work accom-

plished in the death of Christ, which, as we have seen, is the supreme reason for a loving gratitude that would shrink from no sacrifice for the Saviour's sake.

These examples do not in any way support Dr. Rashdall's conclusions. It is not at all true that Peter unintelligently repeats a traditional formula to the effect that Christ bore our sins, and elsewhere reveals his real belief that His death saves us simply by working a moral change in us. On the contrary, his belief in the Lord's death as our sin-bearing Substitute is so fundamental to his thought, so taken for granted as a part of elementary Christian teaching, that he generally refers to it in indirect (but none the less clear) allusions, and never for the purpose of making a doctrinal statement as such. And in using that atoning death as the supreme motive for holiness and self-sacrifice, Peter is in line with Paul, and sets the example that is followed by every preacher of the Word who believes in the Lord as his Sin-bearer.

Next let us examine some examples of Dr. Rashdall's interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii. 32.

Dr. Rashdall comments as follows: "The Son of Man is to be lifted up, not to make a vicarious expiation and appease His Father's wrath, but to draw all men unto Himself, to exercise a moral attractive force." It is quite true that this verse says nothing directly about expiation, though the very words "lifted up" point to the serpent in the wilderness, and suggest in an allusive fashion that life would come through His death (compare iii. 15; viii. 28). But Dr. Rashdall ignores the important fact that our Lord was speaking to a crowd of unbelievers, and it was entirely contrary to His principles to speak plainly of the sacred inner meaning of His coming death to such. In the Synoptic Gospels also, His teaching about His death is given only to disciples.



Dr. Rashdall can even quote John iii. 16 in the sense that Christ died simply in order to reveal His own and His Father's love. This he does by finishing the quotation at the words "only begotten Son," thus ignoring the teaching of the last sentence of the verse, taken together with verses 15 and 17, that Christ died in order that men might be saved from perishing, and have eternal life through believing in Him. This is not fair exposition. Anything might be proved by such means.

Again, Dr. Rashdall quotes John x. 14, 15; xv. 13, in which our Lord speaks of laying down His life for men, and comments that there is nothing in such passages that "implies that Christ died for men in any sense other than that in which a supreme benefactor of humanity might be said to die for men—though of course He is for the writer much more than a supreme benefactor." In view of the fact that the Evangelist had already recorded the words of the Baptist (i. 29), "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," this seems a very strange comment. Surely John i. 29 interprets plainly enough in what sense the Evangelist believed that our Lord laid down His life for men. And if, as we believe, our Lord really said the words attributed to Him, we have further light on them from His own sayings in the other Gospels, which have been discussed in Chapter VI.

But it is in his treatment of the Epistle to the Hebrews that Dr. Rashdall's interpretations yield the most astonishing results. He begins by acknowledging that an interpretation of the Epistle similar to that which we have followed in Chapter V is the impression which the Epistle gives "on the face of it," but proceeds to assert that such an impression is false or at least very one-sided.

He recognizes that the Epistle regards the sacrificial system of Israel as a temporary covenant, a type of the only effectual way of reconciliation with God. So the writer represents the death of Christ as the true sacrifice which would secure the remission of sins, symbolized, but not

plished in the death of Christ, which, as we have seen, is the supreme reason for a loving gratitude that would shrink from no sacrifice for the Saviour's sake.

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would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." But if ceremonial purification could be had by the blood of bulls and goats, "how much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (ix. 14). But if this Epistle teaches that it was necessary that the Saviour should die, and His blood be shed, in order that man should be able to enter into the holiest, we may well conclude that the writer meant just what Paul would have meant by the words, "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (ii. 17, R.V.). (Compare Rom. iii. 25, 26, and see Chapter IV above.)

Dr. Rashdall says in one place\* that, according to this Epistle, the necessity for the death of Christ was simply that He might pass into the heavens, and there eternally intercede for men. What a strange perversion of Heb. vii. 25!

"Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The Lord first makes it possible (by His blood, as chapter x shows) for the sinner to "draw near unto God through him"; but then His work is not finished: He ever lives to make intercession for them, and so not *only* to save them from the guilt of sin once and for all, but also continually from its power. There is no suggestion in this passage, or anywhere in the Epistle, that the chief importance of the death of Christ was to make possible His intercession in heaven.

One more example of Dr. Rashdall's interpretations may be of interest, because it deals with a passage often misunderstood.

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 175.

"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." Heb. x. 7.

Dr. Rashdall comments: "The sacrifice was the sacrifice of perfect obedience." He means that the Lord's obedience to the will of God in itself constituted the sacrifice, to the exclusion of any expiation or propitiation in Paul's sense of the word. So also Bishop Headlam says: "Burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin had no value, but the willing obedience of Jesus was a real sacrifice."\* Let us look at the context. In verse 4 it has been said that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. Then the Septuagint version of Psalm xl. 6-8 is quoted:

"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: . . . then said I, Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God."

The speaker is clearly understood to be our Lord, Who first declares that God has no pleasure in the sacrifices of the Law, and then says, "I come to do thy will." In verse 9 the writer continues: "He (Christ) taketh away the first (the old sacrifices), that He may establish the second (the fulfilment of the Divine will)." But what was this will of God which He fulfilled? Verse 10 supplies the answer: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." What God willed, and Jesus Christ carried out, was our sanctification through the offering of His body for all.

The main emphasis, therefore, is not on the obedience in itself, but on *that which was obeyed*. God had willed an Offering, that of the body of Jesus Christ, which should take the place of the old sacrifices, and *that* is the meaning of the words "He taketh away the first (the sacrifices), that He may establish the second (the carrying out of His will)."

Of course our Lord's perfect obedience was infinitely

\* *The Atonement*, p. 101.



